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Surviving the Wave: Reconstruction after the Tsunami on the south-western coast of Sri Lanka

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2015

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Abstract

My research is concerned with the way in which a coastal community in south-western Sri Lanka, affected by the Asian tsunami of 2004, has rebuilt itself. Prior to the disaster the social processes of this community involved individuals with different levels of capital and capacity (following Bourdieu), using the alliances available to them, to pursue the aspirations of their choice.

My concern in this study is the impact of the tsunami on these social processes. In particular, I want to explain how in rebuilding their lives, the people of this village reproduced core aspirations, relationships and values, even while the effects of the tsunami -- on trajectories and outcomes for different households -- varied.

The village was one in which the spatial organisation was such that the western half was involved in fishing, while the eastern half pursued other occupations. It was a village undergoing significant shifts in social arrangement, and the tsunami amplified rather than disrupted some of these trends.

I am also interested in the inter-play between the local community and various external actors in the processes of reconstruction, particularly in the role played by the State and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

I introduce my research by identifying some of the major issues which bear on my problem, as well as the themes of the disaster literature. Then, I describe the community which is the focus of this research, and the damage that it suffered in the aftermath of the tsunami. This is followed by a discussion of my theoretical and methodological approaches. Finally, I analyse the manner in which various initiatives in relation to relief and reconstruction, fed into the social processes of this community.

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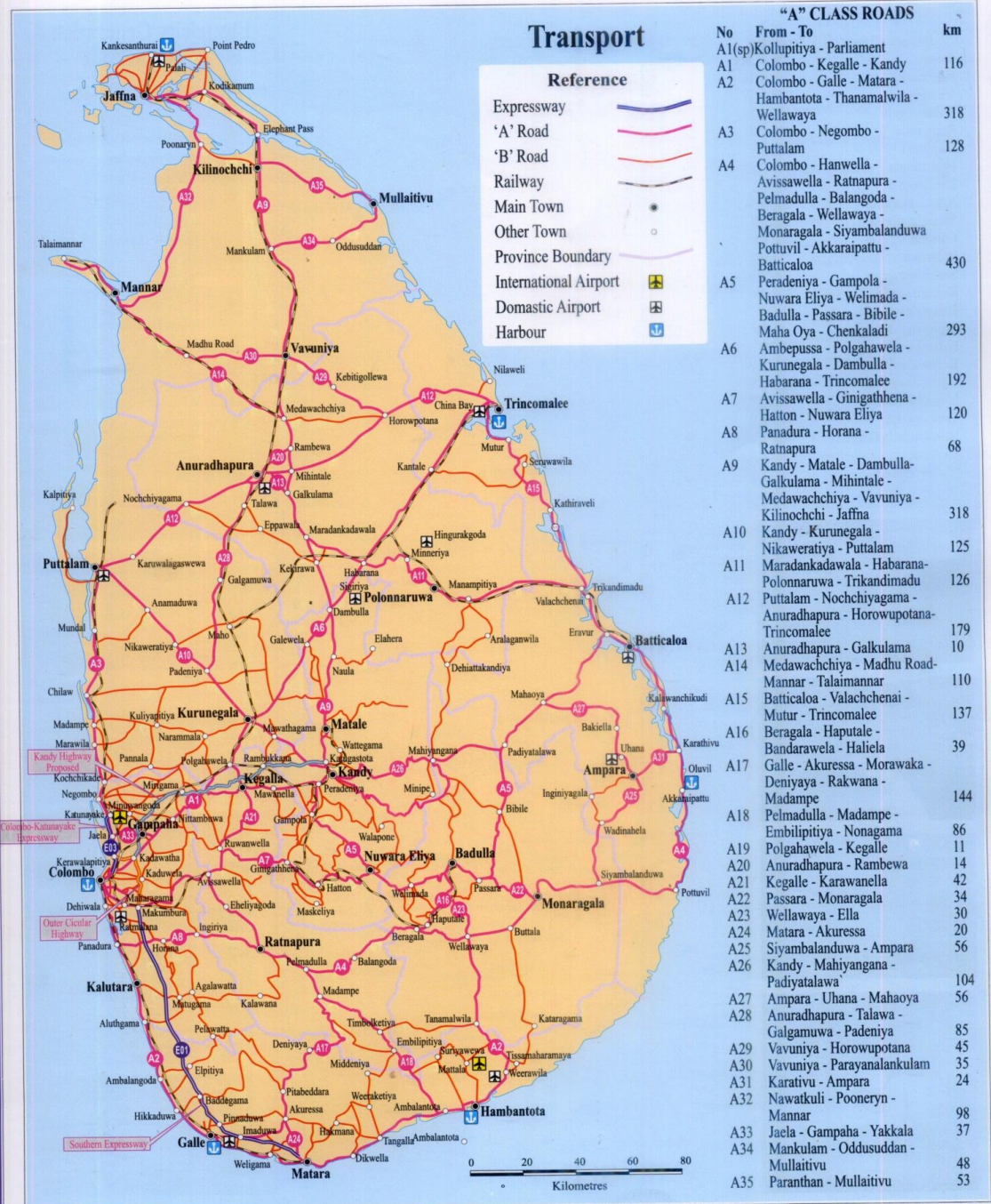
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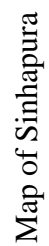
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Source: Sarasavi School Atlas. 4th Edition, 2014. Sarasavi Publishers. Colombo.

SRI LANKA - TRANSPORT

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Abbreviations

ADB	--	Asian Development Bank
BBC	--	British Broadcasting Corporation
BOI	--	Board of Investment
CAFOD	--	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CARE	--	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CCD	--	Coast Conservation Department
CEB	--	Ceylon Electricity Board
CFC	--	Ceylon Fisheries Corporation
CFHC	--	Ceylon Fishery Harbours Corporation
COFIT	--	Coastal Fisheries and Industries Trust
DEC	--	Disasters Emergency Committee
DMC	--	Disaster Management Centre
EEZ	--	Exclusive Economic Zone
FAD	--	Fish Aggregation Device
FAO	--	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FCCISL	--	Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Sri Lanka
GAM	--	Free Aceh Movement
GDP	--	Gross Domestic Product
GN	--	Grama Niladhari
GTZ	--	German Agency for Technical Corporation
IDB	--	Industrial Development Board
IDNDR	--	International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction
IFAD	--	International Fund for Agricultural Development

IRC -- Integrated Relief Command

IUCN -- International Union for Conservation of Nature

JP -- Justice of the Peace

JVP -- Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna

LSSP -- Lanka Sama Samaja Party

LTTE -- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

MC -- Municipal Council

MOU -- Memorandum of Understanding

MP -- Member of Parliament

NARA -- National Aquatic Resources Agency

NGO -- Non-Governmental Organisation

NHDA -- National Housing Development Authority

OXFAM -- Oxford Committee for Famine Relief

PA -- People's Alliance

PC -- Provincial Council

PR -- Proportional Representation

PS -- Pradeshiya Sabha

P-TOMS -- Post Tsunami Operational Management Structure

RADA -- Reconstruction and Development Agency

RDA -- Road Development Authority

SLFP -- Sri Lanka Freedom Party

SLFUW -- Sri Lanka Federation of University Women

SLTB -- Sri Lanka Tourist Board

TAFREN -- Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation

TC -- Town Council

TEC -- Tsunami Evaluation Commission

TO -- Technical Officer

UC -- Urban Council

UDA -- Urban Development Authority

UN -- United Nations

UNDP -- United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF -- United Nations Children's Fund

UNOCHA -- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNP -- United National Party

USAID -- United States Agency for International Development

VC -- Village Council

YWCA -- Young Women's Christian Organisation

Introduction

The Tsunami

The Asian tsunami, on 26 December 2004, struck the eastern coast of Sri Lanka, at approximately 8.00 a.m., local time. During the next two and a half hours, the tsunami hit the southern and western coasts of Sri Lanka. It was caused by an undersea earthquake off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, measuring 9.3 on the Richter scale.¹

Two-thirds of Sri Lanka's coastline was affected by the tsunami. The effect, however, was by no means uniform. While there was complete devastation in one location, a hundred metres away the damage was minimal. Thus, coastal communities were differentially affected by this disaster. This is now known to have been due to the geomorphological particularities of the Sri Lankan coastline. The loss of life, destruction of infrastructure and damage to livelihoods was on a massive scale. It was an event which caused a heavy loss of physical assets both in the community and among individual households.² In some communities the damage to property and livelihoods was on such a scale that they ceased to function as viable social units.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka assessed the total economic loss to the country at US \$ 1.5 billion.³ The devastation was such that President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga had to declare a national state of emergency and appeal for international assistance.

My concern in this study is with the impact of this disaster, on the communities of the south-western coast of Sri Lanka, with a special focus on the village of Sinhapura, located just a few miles to the north of the city of Galle.⁴ Sinhapura is one of the many communities along this coastline, which was severely affected by the tsunami. Galle is the administrative capital of the Southern Province. It has a long history and was once a major port in the country. It continues to remain an important regional centre providing

¹ The tsunami affected the other countries of the Bay of Bengal as well: principally, Indonesia, Thailand and India.

² I use the term household to denote a residential unit consisting, largely, of those who have kin relationships with each. The household is a unit of income, of consumption and expenditure and, often, one of production. See also Stirrat (1988); Netting, Wilk & Arnould (1984); Carsten & Hugh-Jones (1995).

³ Source: Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) Report on the Tsunami.

⁴ This is the pseudonym that I shall use for this village throughout this thesis. Except for proper nouns all non-English terms will be in italics. The names of my informants and all individuals from the village who figure in the thesis have been replaced with pseudonyms.

the Southern Province with important services in relation to education, health, transport, trade and distribution. Galle, though it is no longer a major port, has one of the largest fisheries harbours in Sri Lanka. It is also an important naval base.

Sinhapura is one of the many villages dotted along the Galle Road, a trunk road which snakes along the western and southern coast of Sri Lanka.⁵ This road runs through the centre of the village. Sinhapura is not, per se, a fishing community: that is to say, not all households are involved in the fishing industry. On its western side Sinhapura exhibits all the features of a fishing community, while on its eastern side, it is a non-fishing coastal village.

The geographical position of the village, between Galle to the south and the town of Ambalangoda to the north, has had implications for its growth as a place of importance in the micro region.⁶ By the time of the tsunami, however, Sinhapura did not have the importance that it had had as a centre some decades previously. The location of several government departments and service institutions previously sited in Sinhapura, had been shifted elsewhere in the 1970s. Although less important now, Sinhapura is still a more complex community than many of the neighbouring villages, smaller, and economically undifferentiated, which were, as it happened, almost entirely washed away by the tsunami.

The notion of reconstruction -- loss and recovery -- is a central feature of disaster management in the aftermath of disasters of this nature. As Fordham puts it: "...the dominant 'command-and-control' model of disaster management has as a core aim the 'return to normality' (largely undefined) of the affected community." (Fordham: 2004:175). This model of reconstruction focuses on responses by a range of individuals and institutions, in order to affect the 'return to normality'.

In the case of the tsunami disaster, too, the premise upon which the stakeholders -- the affected communities, the state, the media and the humanitarian and non-governmental organisations involved in relief -- visualised the future was that of 'getting back to normal'. It was a process of construction, through a discourse in which the emphasis was placed upon reconstruction.

⁵ This was the only road connecting Colombo to the south at the time. There is now the Southern Expressway, opened to vehicular traffic in November 2011.

⁶ The way in which Sinhapura achieved this importance, historically, will be discussed more fully in Chapters 1 and 3.

In the face of this disaster the responses oriented towards recovery came from the state, from relief organisations and from communities adjacent to those affected by the disaster as well as from philanthropic individuals.⁷ It was a context in which several agencies, representing many sources of funds, were competing to assist communities in their recovery. The interaction, between those affected by the tsunami and those who sought to assist them, was complex and had its impact on the institutions in the affected communities. The ‘normal’ avenues of succour in times of difficulty -- kin and neighbours -- were of little help in these circumstances. The efforts of the different actors created a context within which there was a new complement of resources, new aspirations and a new framework for the deployment of these resources. Thus, there was a change in resources in relation to assets and income, as well as changes in networks of relationships and the benefits which derived from them.

My focus in this study is on the social processes of Sinhapura, the impact of the tsunami on these processes, and on the processes which have emerged. This resonates with Hastrup’s (2011) conceptualisation of a disaster, not as an event which interrupts a prior state of equilibrium, but as a process through which the tsunami and the village become intertwined.

There was a collection of resources in Sinhapura prior to the tsunami. These resources were dramatically altered after the tsunami, both collectively and individually. What are the phenomena which have to be understood and explained, and what are the problems that can be derived from these? What are the significant institutions which need to figure in this analysis? Equally, what is the explanation for the differential behaviour of individuals and households, in the aftermath of this disaster? The processes through which communities remake themselves in the face of a disaster is, therefore, the focus of this study.⁸

While my main interest is Sinhapura, I have tried to give my research a comparative dimension by expanding my focus to take in the western and southern coast of Sri

⁷ By relief organisations I refer to the UN and other international aid agencies, international and local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and all other organisations of a non-governmental nature which were involved in disaster relief, some of which had an ad hoc character.

⁸ The formulation of my problem and the concepts that I use are discussed in Chapter 2. In particular, I elaborate the sense in which I use the notion of social process.

Lanka, from Panadura, immediately to the south of Colombo, to Hambanthota, in the deep south. I spent a few days in key locations and observed the social processes of these affected communities.

The Origin of my Research

My family began a tsunami relief programme in Sinhapura on the 30th of December, the fourth day after the tsunami. This was formalised, in March 2005, into a Trust.⁹ It is from the involvement in this exercise that the idea of basing my PhD research in Sinhapura emerged.

This section describes the circumstances under which the location of Sinhapura was chosen for this study. I do so with the objective of providing some background, but also because the experience of the relief programme strongly influenced my approach to the research.

My family has owned beach land in Sinhapura since 1976. When the tsunami struck, our first concern was for the people who were taking care of the land for us and for those in the community whom we had got to know over a period of many years. Due to the breakdown in the systems of communication we could not get in touch with anyone from Sinhapura until the 28th of December. The people that we were most concerned with were safe from physical harm, but were entirely without food. Their household stocks had been washed away, as had the stocks in the High Street stores. The systems of food distribution had broken down completely, due to the destruction of bridges and roadways. The need, which was urgently communicated to us, was for food supplies.

On the 30th of December we hired a van, filled it with dry goods such as rice, dhal, sugar, tea, and other necessities, and drove down to Sinhapura. As a bridge along the Galle Road had been destroyed the traffic police directed us to turn inland and find our way to Sinhapura along inland routes. We reached Sinhapura, through a somewhat circuitous route. During the next few days we travelled south several times taking van loads of dry goods with us, until the systems of food distribution were re-established.

Meanwhile, the new school year was about to begin, on the 10th of January 2005. Parents were desperate because the children's school books had been washed away.

⁹ The Coastal Fisheries and Industries Trust (COFIT) referred to as the Trust hereafter.

Requests were made to us that we supply the items which were lost. Thus, on the 7th of January, we took a van load of books and other stationery supplies through the kindness of a businessman known to us, who let us purchase many items of stationery at a substantial discount.

For Sinhapura, external assistance from any other source, whether governmental or otherwise, was non-existent at this point. Hence, my family and I became the focal point for the requests for assistance that the community made. It came to a point that there was a sea of people thronging the temporary office that we had set up on the beach land. We had to issue numbers in order to impose some order on a situation where everybody wanted to see us, immediately! Once the most urgent needs of food supplies and school books had been met, the real nature of the predicament of the community, with an almost total loss of income, now stared us, starkly, in the face.

From all this it can be seen that we, too, were caught up in this process, responding as best as we could to the constant demands which were made upon us, within the scope of the limited resources available to us. These resources came from friends and relatives, resident outside Sri Lanka, some of whom happened to be in the country for the Christmas vacation. The only condition placed on these funds was that we had to be directly responsible for the use of the funds. The other funds received by the Trust came from three NGOs, including one in Pakistan which was keen to assist a relief effort where the people to whom they gave the money were already working with tsunami affected people. Apart from the basic requirement that the funds should be spent on the regeneration of this community, the Trust was given a free hand in the decision-making process. The obligations vis-à-vis the funders were more moral than otherwise. Furthermore, the funders were happy that as we had a property in the village which could be used as the office, there were no institutional expenses which had to be borne by them.¹⁰

The more established, formal organisations found it difficult to fund the Trust. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for instance, refused funding on the ground that the Trust had no record of past performance, for at least two years, which they could have examined. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) had similar concerns regarding the Trust.

¹⁰ Expenses relating to transport and accommodation were borne by my parents and myself.

In this context a formal organisation became a necessity, especially to handle the financial aspects. We set up the Coastal Fisheries and Industries Trust (COFIT), in March 2005, and it is within the framework of this Trust that we conceived and implemented the tsunami relief programme.¹¹

The challenges in Sinhapura were not so much those of health and injury; nor was there a large scale disruption of housing. The damage was largely to the sources of livelihood. The context was one in which the focus of the government and non-governmental agencies was, prominently, on housing. Our own perception, however, was that the need in Sinhapura was, unmistakably, for the resuscitation of livelihoods.

Thus, having observed the unfolding stages of relief and reconstruction, along the south-western coastline, we decided that our efforts should be focused, intensively, on Sinhapura. We felt that our skills, experience and resources would be much better utilised in working in an intensive way, in one community, immersing ourselves in its problems and engaging in a concentrated way with specific households. This was in contrast to the approach of many larger, established, organisations which concentrated on one or two initiatives, such as housing, over a wide geographical area. The emphasis on livelihoods was very much the outcome of our intensive method. If this had not been our approach it is unlikely that we would have seen the significance of the regeneration of livelihoods, and the intricacies of executing such a programme. We hoped that by concentrating our effort in this way, we would begin to understand the many complex processes which are inherent in community responses to a disaster, and the inter-relations between these processes. Through this exercise, therefore, important features relating to the tsunami disaster could be identified and analysed, yielding applications with relevance for all tsunami-affected areas. This advantage would have been lost if we had spread ourselves and our resources far more thinly over a wider area, encompassing many more communities. We were, in fact, applying an anthropological approach to the relief operation by concentrating, intensively, on a single community and by giving this intensive approach ballast through research.

¹¹ It is my parents and I who were involved in this exercise. My father, Dr. S. P.F. Senaratne, is a Development Anthropologist. My mother, Lalitha Senaratne, is a Barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple and an Attorney-at-law, Sri Lanka. My father was the Chairman of the Trust and it was under his aegis that much of the work of the Trust was planned and implemented.

It was having assessed the situation around us that we launched into the livelihoods programme. The objective of the Trust was to resuscitate the livelihoods, destroyed by the tsunami, and to provide immediate relief. However, the approach was not merely to make good the losses which were incurred because of the tsunami, but to establish a foundation which could provide a basis for the future.

The fishing fleet of Sinhapura was considerably damaged and the businesses involved, both in trading and in the provision of services, were destroyed. The Trust was involved in the resuscitation of the fishing industry; the coir industry; the cottage industries; and, the regeneration of the commercial hub, the High Street.¹² I was the coordinator of this Trust from its inception, in March 2005, until the time that I left Sri Lanka to start the MPhil/PhD programme at SOAS, in September 2006.¹³

Together with the livelihoods programme we established a research programme. We felt that such a programme would enable us to respond to the needs of individual households and make disbursements more equitably than otherwise. It was, inevitably, research done under pressure. We conducted a household survey to acquire baseline information about this community and used methods such as informant group sessions, interviews and life histories.¹⁴ This was not with the simple objective of having enough data on a given household so that we could decide whether the request for assistance was reasonable. Such a request could only be assessed if comparative information was available, i.e., if the household in question could be set against other households, and its circumstances more comprehensively evaluated.¹⁵

Beyond the focus on households, the understanding that we acquired involved us also in the analyses of those institutions, economic and otherwise, which linked these households to each other. The information emerging out of this research was highly relevant in the disbursement of grants for livelihood resuscitation, in a context in which there were many false applications for aid. Our attempt was to distinguish genuine

¹² The traders of the High Street organized themselves, in February 2005, into a Trade Association, under the aegis of the Trust.

¹³ A detailed analysis of the Trust, its interactions with the community, other organisations working in the region, and the institutions of government is provided in Chapter 5.

¹⁴ As my father was a Social Anthropologist of many years' experience and I had been trained in the discipline, up to the level of a Masters degree, we were able to evolve a methodology which was appropriate for this purpose. A full discussion of these methodologies is to be found in Chapter 2.

¹⁵ This is discussed in some detail in Chapter 5.

applicants for aid from others who had got accustomed by then, to applying for any assistance that was available. Mohanasundaram, for instance, makes the point that in the provision of proper relief proper information of who is affected is required: “At the stage of rescue and relief operations, a high degree of emotion and sympathy prevails. This can alter the direction and speed of such operations. However, in the case of rehabilitation work, the onus must be on people’s long term welfare and decisions must not be taken in a spontaneous manner.” (2007:87) We felt that a systematic approach was a necessity, and that involved research.

The survey was conducted by four investigators working in two teams. All four investigators were young women from Sinhapura. Prior to the commencement of the survey my father, as Chairman of the Trust, made an announcement at the Trust premises regarding the purpose of the survey and how it would be conducted. He also requested the community to render all the assistance that it could to the four fieldworkers.

At the end of each day the four members of the team would discuss the information that had been obtained with my father and myself. Occasionally, it became necessary for the teams to go back to a household, to clarify the information. The inherent weaknesses of a survey are, on the one hand, that there may be too many questions and ones which are inappropriately phrased for the purpose of obtaining the information that is required; on the other, the possibility that the information may be inaccurate. Non-verifiable information such as attitudes and behaviour become problematic categories in survey research. As Leach (1967) has argued there is a range of sociological phenomena that is not accessible to this method of investigation. Furthermore, there is the danger that the survey can be used as an instrument of authority or discrimination in benefactor relationships. While as far as we were concerned this was not an issue, the village saw the survey as something the investigators might, sometimes, use against them. We dealt with these issues in two ways. The first was, that as it was a basic household survey, the questions were not of an order which might have led to highly subjective answers.¹⁶ Furthermore, the investigators were from the village and knew its context and its

¹⁶ The survey dealt with: household composition; intra-household relationships, education, occupation, kin relationships, land and house ownership; ownership of fishing craft; the damage consequent upon the tsunami; aid obtained at that point in time.

inhabitants well. The second was, that at the end of each day, the four investigators, my father and I reviewed the day's findings. This was an opportunity to further examine the data collected and also to counter, through cross-questioning, any agendas that the investigators might have been pursuing as well as to counter the strategic representation of households. Thus, there was a process of progressive and continuous corroboration.

Was the Trust a unified source of intention and action? Interaction at the end of the day between the three of us, members of a nuclear family unit, enabled a review of the day's activities. The consensus which emerged out of this discussion, and sometimes disagreement, meant that there was a uniformity of action as far as the Trust was concerned, even if not always of intention.

It was inevitable, as the programme got underway, that we would need to re-examine its direction and its objectives. Clearly, we wanted to make our disbursements to the people who were most in need and whose appeals for relief were genuine. Our principal attempt was to restore whatever it was that a household had lost. An extension of this principle was the generation of an alternate source of income where the original one had been lost.

In almost all instances, funds which were sought for educational purposes were regarded as expenditure which was based on a legitimate aspiration. In all this it was not, however, the intention of the Trust to spark off a major change in the social order of the community, even though this was, sometimes, an unintended consequence. For instance, for the crew members who were given canoes this became a supplementary source of income which continued to give them some measure of independence, even after the large boats on which they had crewed had been repaired and were operative once again.

An issue which we had to deal with, many times, was whether the individual was more important than the community, or vice-versa. I cannot say that we applied a consistent principle in this regard. Let me illustrate this through the example of assistance for the repair of boats. We did, on some occasions, refuse a large sum for the substantial repair of a single boat on the principle that that the same sum could be allocated for the repair of three boats and, concomitantly, benefit more than one individual. Equally, there were

occasions when we did support the repair of one large boat which, if quickly effected, could provide incomes for eight households.

An exercise in planning as a necessary preliminary step, was clearly not possible in the circumstances. The plan emerged, almost on its own, out of our interaction with the community, the initial relief disbursements and the research programme which we had embarked upon. We had to go into action with the disbursement of funds as a matter of urgency. As this got underway, an ad hoc committee of those whom we knew in the village helped us with background information which facilitated our decision making until this could be based on our own investigations.

At this stage, moreover, we had no intention of taking this project beyond the level of relief. It was, in that sense, seen by us as a short-term exercise, even though we were always mindful of the future. Thus, this was not a participatory development project in the conventional sense of consultation with the community, feedback, and a plan which incorporated this. The 'planning process', if one could identify such a stage, was not straightforward, nor objective and far from obvious.

To this extent, it might be argued, this was a top-down exercise. To a certain extent this is true. However, it must also be pointed out that there was a high degree of interaction between the community and the Trustees, and that the dynamics of the community and the needs of individual households determined, through interaction, the evolving programme of the Trust and its objectives. Participation lay in this interaction rather than in prior planning, which in the context was not possible.¹⁷

The Trust could be creative in its disbursements in a way that larger, well-established, organisations could not. The rules and procedures of such organisations have been developed through long experience and are, in part, designed to avoid fraud and other types of mismanagement. This meant that their operation, by its very nature, had to be restricted. The Trust, operating as it did in a single village, had greater flexibility. It was

¹⁷ A British social scientist visiting Sinhapura, at this stage, remarked that the relationship between the community and the Trustees was one of friendship. What was implied was that there was a close relationship between the two, rather than the more impersonal interactions that he had encountered in the other places that he had visited.

able to respond to needs wherever they existed, untrammelled by the rules set by an external authority.¹⁸

However, the Trust was exposed to the risks arising from the very flexibility which I have described above. Routines and procedures governing the established activities of recognised institutions, which could have guided the Trust in its disbursements were lacking. The method of working closely with the community exposed us, in some instances, to allegations of favouritism, the disbursement of grants to inappropriate beneficiaries and other alleged abuses of position. One evening, shortly after dusk, a stone landed on the roof of the Trust premises. Present at the time were myself, my parents, our local coordinator and her assistant, the caretaker of the beach land, his wife and three small children, and about four applicants for assistance. We rushed out into the garden which fronted the High Street but were unable to spot anyone. The general consensus amongst those present, was that this was the work of an individual who was dissatisfied with the response to the application for a grant or, alternatively, one who was unhappy about the favourable response to a rival's application.

There were those who received a grant and then came back a second and third time, for further assistance. As a principle, we did not encourage such applications as our objective was to restore the income of as many households as we could, in the context of the limited resources at our disposal. Thus, in addition to individuals who were disaffected because they did *not* receive any assistance from the Trust, there were those who became disaffected *despite* having received assistance from the Trust.¹⁹

The country-wide emphasis at this time was on the restoration of material loss; housing in particular. However, there was also an attempt to generate other endeavours within a broad community development perspective. There was, for instance, the initiative to collect waste material as a community exercise. In Sinhapura, the response to this and similar schemes was lukewarm. Thus, we came to the conclusion that while the objective was laudable, people affected by a disaster were slow to respond to such ventures, while their households remained in disarray. The immediate concern was with the recovery of the household -- physical, emotional, notional, aspirational. It was after

¹⁸ However, the Trust did have to abide by the laws of the land, especially as they pertained to a Trust. Furthermore, it had to abide by the sense of moral accountability felt by the Trustees.

¹⁹ I discuss my position as the coordinator of the Trust, and the implications that this had for my research in the methodology section of Chapter 2.

a measure of recovery had been achieved or was within their sights, that people would be ready to engage with wider community concerns.

After some time had passed, we began to think in terms of the long term development of this community. Our perceptions derived from a programme of research, focused, not merely on households and their inter-relations, but also on the complex processes of this community, in its inter-relations with other communities, located, moreover, in a region with particular characteristics.

In 2006 there was a shift in the focus of the activities of the Trust away from relief to more long term activities. This had much to do with the perception that the village had of us. We were people from Colombo -- an academic and previous head of a government institution; a lawyer; and their daughter -- with whom, in the normal course of affairs, the village would not have interacted at this intense level. At first people were puzzled as to why the three Trustees should spend so much time and effort on the village. Some wondered whether we had political ambitions. When this was found not to be the case, the Trustees became the people with whom the village developed a close connection as those who were approachable, who had contacts in Colombo and, who could be called upon to go beyond the immediate problems of rehabilitation. Even more than the material capital which flowed into Sinhapura through the Trust -- approximately Rs. 5 million -- was the sense in the community, which prevails to this day whenever we visit, that in their hour of need we, as a family, were there for the village, to speak on its behalf to the outside world, in a context where the village felt vulnerable vis-a-vis Kotigama and Hikkaduwa.

What can be said about the personal imperatives which propelled us into this activity? There was, on the one hand, the feeling that this disaster was an occasion when privileged people such as ourselves have to get involved. Then there were the ideas about social order, community, need, genuineness and rationality which were a product of the personal social, economic and political context from which we came (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001).

This was the context of the origin of my PhD research. My research emerged out of my experiences and observations as the coordinator of the Trust. This role involved two major functions. The first was participation in the programme of research, together with

the rest of the team, in order to ensure that the data yielded by this exercise could be used for decisions about assistance, as well as for the planning of longer term programmes. The other had to do directly with the disbursement of funds, i.e., with the management of the programme. The need to make assessments, sometimes without all the relevant data to hand, meant that there was a cumulative increase in my understanding of the community, through an avenue other than that based on research. Applications for assistance had to be examined and their suitability for support decided upon, very quickly. All the information necessary to make such assessments was not always available. Some extrapolation of information from other sources, became necessary. Very soon, in the majority of instances, we learnt whether the assumptions that we had made in making decisions regarding the disbursement of funds were valid. Decision-making on the basis of tentative knowledge sometimes led to a confirmation of what was previously tentative. In this sense, it has been, as Mosse puts it: "...an unusual type of social research; complex, long-term..." (2005:ix).²⁰

The special skills that I had to conduct this research derived, *inter alia*, from the fact that my disciplinary training, at the masters and undergraduate level, had been in anthropology and development.²¹ I was a Sri Lankan whose mother tongue was Sinhala and I had 'known' the south-western coastal region of Sri Lanka from childhood. Furthermore, I had been involved with Sinhapura from the 4th day after the tsunami (30 December, 2004), and had a 'memory' of the unfolding events.²² In the course of 2005 I had acquired some acquaintance with other communities on this coast, through separate tsunami work with the National Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and with the Sri Lanka Federation of University Women (SLFUW).

My work as the coordinator of the project led me to the subject and to the location of this PhD research. It also led me to some of its component problems and to the approaches which I have since refined. For instance, the emphasis placed on school books and on education by households in the midst of devastation by the tsunami, lead me to reflect, at a very early stage, upon the aspirations prevalent in this community and

²⁰ These themes, such as the obstacles to understanding that the role of fund disbursement might have imposed, are further discussed in the methodology section of Chapter 2.

²¹ My disciplinary training: BA Honours, University of Sussex; M.Sc, London School of Economics (LSE).

²² Further discussion of my role as coordinator and as anthropologist, and the way in which this informed my approach to fieldwork is to be found in the methodology section of Chapter 2.

the ways in which the community sought to realise these aspirations. In these and other ways my spell of work with the Trust shaped, in many respects, the subsequent direction taken by my research. To this extent, this research has much in common with McGilvray's and Gamburd's statement:

"It will be obvious from the chapters in this book that in our writing, the temptation to explore particularly rich areas of our research data often supplanted our formal NSF research design. These choices reflect our pre-existing knowledge of specific regions and cultural practices in Sri Lanka, as well as the wish to seize upon opportunities that opened up in our individual research sites. Good social science should leave room for serendipitous outcomes, especially in projects involving intensive first-hand fieldwork and data-gathering." (2010:164).

Sinhapura exhibited many of the characteristics common to these coastal communities. It had, however, some unique features which called for analysis, in particular, the way in which its social processes appeared to be the product of the articulation between its fishing and non-fishing components.

Sri Lanka was shattered by the sudden and the devastating impact of the tsunami. Its effect was felt, primarily, in the coastal areas. The catastrophic effect of the tsunami was brought home to me because it had a direct impact on a community known to me and in a location in which my family owned some land. This interest was soon transformed, through the Trust, into one of active participation in regeneration. The tsunami became a national event and, thereafter, an international one. I had a powerful feeling of involvement, as well as one of responsibility, as far as issues of 'representation' and 'ownership' were concerned. The fact that I come from a politically-oriented family had, no doubt, some bearing on this.²³ In turn, this has had an effect on my perspective on anthropology, itself, and on how I, as a national of a developing country, (Das, 1995; Goonatilake, 2001) look at research within the framework of anthropology. Anthropology, has, then, not been about studying the 'exotic' or the 'other', but about understanding *my* position in my society, in my community, in my culture. As Eyben puts it: "This is much more than life-style. It is about choosing other perspectives to look at the inter-connections between history and my own life story and the choices I have made or failed to make." (2006:18).

²³ My grandmother, Florence Senanayake, was the first woman Member of Parliament (MP), in Sri Lanka's (then Ceylon) first parliament, after Independence in 1947.

The premises from which the Trust had functioned, my mother's property in Sinhapura, was sold in January 2006. Alternative premises were found in the form of a small house fronting the High Street, not far from the beach where the boats were berthed. This became the office of the Trust and it is in these premises that all further activities of the Trust were conducted.²⁴ When I started my fieldwork in September 2007, it is this little house which was my base.

The Research Agenda, its Issues and its Perspectives

My research is not *only* an ethnography of a village which is, in part, devoted to fishing. It attempts to bring into focus a set of issues which relate to units wider than the village -- for instance, the political structure and institutions which, in the aftermath of the tsunami, dealt with reconstruction. Although the main focus of this study is Sinhapura, at many points and on many issues it goes beyond this single village and encompasses the region in which this village is located. Many issues which are critical to the region are illuminated by the circumstances and the events which take place in the village. There is, therefore, an important sense in which this is a study of a village and its region, even though not every part of this region is described in great ethnographic detail. Thus, the scope of my research has a wider focus than Sinhapura and, in this sense, it is an ethnography of the ways in which the institutions of the state, of relief, and of the village mesh.

The tsunami affected South and South-East Asia at the height of the tourist season. Many tourists from the west were in these countries to enjoy the Christmas holidays. Thailand, for instance, was a popular destination for Finnish tourists and 179 Finnish lives were lost (Kivikuru, 2006). The result was that in several western countries the tsunami received considerable media coverage which translated into unprecedented relief from the USA, Japan and Europe (Aeberhard, 2008). This relates to a wider issue. Regeneration took on not only a national character but also a global one, with a local impact. External assistance, originating in international centres, sifted and sanctioned by the national government, ultimately reached coastal populations. I am interested, therefore, in how an engagement with the issues of social reproduction, through the lens

²⁴ In June 2013 the premises were vacated and the activities of the Trust wound up. However, the personal connections between the Trustees and the community continue.

of a reconstruction discourse, aids the understanding of the interaction between global, national and local processes (Marcus, 1990). As Mosse puts it:

“...this means exploring a new kind of anthropology, one which situates the production of knowledge about other people, and places it explicitly within the framework of international relations, analysing the political and historical relations of power, and the systems of values which shape representations. Moreover, it does so in a way that places the anthropologist within this frame, and turns a self-critical lens onto the anthropologist-actor as a member of a transnational community, speaking from within and in the first person.” (2005:11).

This research will also be an analysis of the dynamics of a fishing community, in a context in which such studies are not plentiful. These communities in Sri Lanka belong to a diversity of cultures. There are Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims engaged in fishing. The Sinhalese are Buddhists and Christians. The Tamils are Hindus and Christians.²⁵ To this must be added the variety of technologies that are used and the variation in the size of communities. It is in this context, therefore, that I am concerned with incorporating a comparative dimension, into this research, in terms of other communities along the coast which have different geographical, social and economic landscapes and which responded to the tsunami in different ways. I shall be exploring the relationship between the occupational characteristics of fishing, the socio-cultural context, and the way that these, together with the dimensions of uncertainty, independence and indebtedness, have framed the response of fishing communities to disaster (Pollnac, 1985; Krishna, 1990; Acheson, 1981; Firth, 1966; Stirrat, 1988).

I have referred above to social processes, and what happens to them consequent upon a disaster. This is the chief concern of my study. These processes are located in a context. They have a geographical and regional context. They have an institutional context. They also have a conceptual context. In this section I examine the geographical, regional, institutional and conceptual issues which have a bearing on, and which illuminate, this context, placing my research within its relevant setting. Some of these issues figure in the writings on the analysis of disaster. Others have emerged from my experience of implementing a tsunami relief programme in Sinhapura, and from the fieldwork that I conducted on the south-western coast of Sri Lanka. In the last chapter of the thesis, once

²⁵ Krishnamurthy (2007) highlights the diversity of fishing communities in Tamil Nadu which is inclusive of all castes and also *adivasis* and *dalits*. ‘Adivasis’ are the scheduled tribes in India. ‘Dalits’ are the scheduled castes in India.

the ethnographic data has been analysed, I shall be reverting to these themes and issues in the light of the analysis.

The Disaster Literature

Much of what has been written about disaster deals with floods, earthquakes, droughts, fires, cyclones and man-made disasters such as oil spills and chemical leaks. McGilvray & Gamburd (2010) state that it is a wall of water, not a conventional flood, which inundates lowland areas.²⁶ It has a sudden destructive impact but, unlike an earthquake, does not devastate large contiguous regions. The close parallels with a tsunami are volcanic eruptions, flash floods and coastal storm surges. All of these permit only a small degree of advance warning and tend to affect narrowly delineated geographical areas or ecological zones. The tsunami is not a 'periodic' disaster (Dyer, 2002): it is a relatively rare type of disaster whose form and character are influenced by the geomorphological characteristics of the coastline. Blaikie et al (1994) include only four brief references to tsunami episodes in the second edition of their book published in 2004, a little before the Asian tsunami occurred.²⁷ My research, therefore, is concerned with the response of communities where natural disasters have been infrequent, as opposed to those constantly at the risk of disaster events.

There are few ethnographies of tsunami disasters which explore, in depth, the dynamics of post-disaster societies. Therefore, my research has the capacity to add a new dimension to the disaster literature and also to contribute to an understanding of the disaster experience in Sri Lanka.

Disasters have been analysed, classified and defined in various ways. Recent thinking has moved away from conceptualising disasters as created by natural causes, alone, towards seeing them as a product of the interaction between human endeavour and the natural world (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 1999, 2002; Oliver-Smith, 1996, 1999; Vayda and McKay, 1974; Lees and Bates, 1990; Blaikie et al, 1994; Smith, 1996; Lewis, 1999; Wijkman & Timberlake, 1984; Amaratunga & Fowler, 2007; Anderson & Woodrow, 1989). As McGilvray & Gamburd put it disasters are now seen as all encompassing; as highlighting the relationship between the environment and human beings.

²⁶ A full account of the physical aspects of a tsunami is provided by Jana (2005), Suman (2005), Karan (2011) and Kumar & Sahani (2007).

²⁷ There have been descriptions of historic tsunamis in countries such as Portugal, Chile and Indonesia.

Furthermore, expectations are changing as far as disaster relief is concerned, with access to relief seen as an entitlement (Aeberhard, 2008). The attempt has been to encourage a shift away from a reactive strategy of post-disaster improvisation, to a pro-active one of pre-disaster planning and preparedness, in the context of the fact that the 1990s was the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). As a general perspective this relates to my conceptualisation of a disaster feeding into the social processes of a community.

According to Simpson (2012), the literature on disaster is American dominated with three themes running through it. One of these is the definition and taxonomy of what a disaster is, and what it is not. Another is concerned with the event, as against the aftermath, where the moment of catastrophe is confused with what anthropologists, for instance, actually study. Simpson highlights the fact that the focus of study is not so much the event but the aftermath. He states that while there are structural similarities -- the collapse of social distinctions, mourning, identity, re-formation of distinctions and the creation of new economies -- each event creates a particular kind of aftermath. I believe that my focus on social process encapsulates both these ideas as referred to by Simpson.

The third theme in the literature identified by Simpson views a disaster as a natural laboratory for the study of human behaviour, where the underlying structure of society is exposed: "Disasters disclose fundamental features of society and culture, laying bare crucial relationships." (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman:2002:6). This implies a duality between a 'surface' reality and the 'hidden' structure which is revealed by a disaster. It is a two tier conceptualisation, within a 'structural' framework. This highlights the constant tension between the conceptualisation of a disaster as a process, on the one hand, and as an event, which 'ruptures' a static entity, on the other. My conceptualisation of disasters is that they should be: "... understood as processes unto themselves, rather than merely events that trigger processes." (Garcia-Acosta:2002:58).

The concept of vulnerability is central to this literature (Blaikie et al, 1994; Oliver-Smith 1999, 2002; Hoffman 1999, 2002; Varley, 1994; Twigg and Bhatt, 1998; Cannon, 2000; Frerks, 2010; McGilvray & Gamburd, 2010; Lewis, 1999; Hilhorst & Bankoff, 2004). This approach looks at those aspects of society that reduce or exacerbate the impact of a hazard. It sees the effects of the disaster as a product arising from the

conditions of inequality and subordination in a society; the distribution of resources; and a specific combination of a natural hazard and disadvantageous circumstances (Maskrey, 1989). As Blaikie et al (1994) state, vulnerability represents the lack of ability to anticipate, cope with, and resist, the effects of a natural hazard. Vulnerability tends to be associated with the poor, although poverty and vulnerability are not always correlated. There is also a shift in emphasis, in this approach, from post-disaster response to the mitigation of pre-disaster conditions; the idea that vulnerability, in a disaster context, cannot be separated from vulnerability in everyday life (Fordham, 2004). The concept of vulnerability has been useful in pointing to the different effects of the same natural disaster on communities which differ in the matters of resources and ecological circumstances. The approach has been useful in showing how the impact of such a disaster varies from one community to another. However, it has been of little use in explaining the effects of a disaster within a community. Thus, in my research, I cannot see that it has much analytical or methodological significance, from an anthropological viewpoint, in view of the geography of Sinhapura. It is, though, an important general perspective.

The disaster literature also focuses on the concept of risk. According to Paine (2002) ideas about risk attempt to explain how it is dealt with within certain cultural processes in terms of the avoidance of the construction of risk, as a category, through repression, insulation and fatalism. Repression involves the denial of the existence of risk; insulation implies the protection of the self through, for example, a religious process; fatalism is the acceptance of what might happen as part of one's destiny. The literature also deals with some of the issues of risk management (Zeckhauser & Shepard, 1984; Quarantelli, 1986; Smith, 1996; Paine, 2002).²⁸ I shall examine Sinhapura's way of managing risk in the course of this thesis.

Another issue in the literature is the role of women in the context of a disaster. The dominant paradigm is a masculine perspective (Fordham, 2004; Enarson and Morrow, 1998; Mies and Shiva, 1993; Agarwal, 1992; Wickramasinghe & Ariyabandu, 2003; Ruwanpura & de Mel, 2006k; de Mel, 2009; Ruwanpura, 2009; Goonesekere, 2009). Post-disaster reconstruction focuses on the formal sector and, as women tend to occupy

²⁸ Zeckhauser and Shepard (1984) state that effective risk management depends on the implementation of a sequential series of actions -- pre-disaster planning; preparedness; response; recovery and reconstruction.

a disproportionately large position in the informal sector, they tend to be marginalized in terms of access to resources and services. It is women who suffer most in a disaster (Hyndman, 2008). Furthermore, the point has been made that women are not visible in decision-making positions, in committees and organizations dealing with disasters, such that there is little incorporation of a feminine perspective into the policies relating to disasters (Neal and Phillips, 1990). Relief camps are often managed by men who are not sensitive to the issues of sexual and gender based violence, and to the need to safeguard the dignity of women (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Rees, 2007; Akerkar, 2007; Divakalala, 2007; Youngs, Jones & Pande, 2005). As women's experiences are rarely reflected in the descriptions and analyses of disasters, they become designated as 'different' and 'special' and, therefore, not part of the disaster mainstream (Hyndman, 2009). For instance, there is little disaster research which has focussed on the special ways in which women experience disasters in terms of issues relating to feminine hygiene and child care. I am interested in the experience of the women of Sinhapura in terms of these themes.

An aspect of the literature on the tsunami is a comparison of international disaster response objectives, principles and standards, with actual performance (de Silva, 2007; Jayasuriya & McCawley, 2010; Nanayakkara, 2007; Mulligan & Shaw, 2011; ActionAid et al, 2007²⁹). The many evaluatory and prescriptive documents by institutions such as the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) make the assertion, amongst others, that exceptional funding did not lead to an exceptional response, because the international humanitarian community focussed on the implementation of its own agendas, rather than on the agendas of the affected communities (Telford, Cosgrave & Houghton, 2006; Frerks, 2010).³⁰ I do not intend my research to be an evaluation of success or failure. I hope that it will be a series of critical reflections on a process, which will have a bearing on these issues.

The tsunami literature contains some generalisations regarding, for instance, the economy: "The tsunami disaster has paralysed the economy" (Domroes:2006:xi). The

²⁹ Tsunami Response: A Human Rights Assessment. An assessment by ActionAid, the People's Movement for Human Rights and Habitat International. Source: www.alnap.org/pool/files/actionaid_tsunami_hro_jan2006.pdf Accessed on 11 September 2012.

³⁰ The TEC conducted five independent thematic assessments in 2005. Source: Synthesis Report of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition. www.tsunami-evaluation.org; Accessed 31 March 2007.

tsunami affected areas did not make a vital contribution to Sri Lanka's economy, except for the immediate and potential impact on tourism. The significant contributors to the Sri Lankan economy are the textile industry; the tea industry; foreign remittances from domestic labour in the middle-east; the rubber industry; and, to a lesser extent, the coconut industry. It is true that fisheries production was seriously affected, but this has never been a substantial contributor to the economy. As Mulligan and Shaw put it:

“The relatively limited economic impact is due to the fact that the sectors that experienced the most extensive damage, fisheries and tourism, are relatively minor contributors to the national economy, and losses in these sectors were offset by a post-tsunami construction boom and strong growth in the manufacturing and inland plantation agriculture sectors, which were unaffected by the tsunami.” (Mulligan & Shaw: 2011:238)

Then, there are comments regarding industry: “In the first year following the tsunami, all small-scale industries, including fisheries, in the affected rural communities were completely abandoned” (Domroes:2006:16). Many small-scale industries such as the coir industry, and cottage crafts such as lace-making and embroidery, revived quickly through the efforts of small local organisations, such as the Trust, and the Coir Council of Sri Lanka. The fisheries industry while seriously affected was operational, in an embryonic way, in many communities by March 2005 in order to take advantage of the last month of the fishing season (April) on the southern and western coast. Clearly, narratives such as those of Domroes misrepresent this disaster.

The coordination of relief and recovery efforts based on a long-term perspective for current and future reconstruction activities -- so that short term gains will not create long-term problems -- is another theme in the literature. As McGilvray and Gamburd put it: “The goal of combining reconstruction with economic change and socio-economic development forms a second theme in contemporary natural disaster studies.” (McGilvray and Gamburd:2010:65). The assumption is that when resources come into a community, on an unusual scale, they must be put to the best use: “..... relief is an ideal entry point for embarking on development interventions.” (Emerson: 2007:106).

Rebuilding after a disaster, is seen as the opportunity to initiate development programmes, which decrease the susceptibility levels of local people and mitigate the potential impact of hazards.³¹ In this context, research is presented as a fundamental

³¹ Some of these projects in Sri Lanka: teaching coastal populations, particularly women, to swim; the building of coastal barriers.

component of redevelopment. The adoption of an Eco-Health Framework for redevelopment, and the social, economic, cultural and political consequences of the Asian tsunami as well as a holistic approach to its remediation, is another aspect (Amaratunga & Fowler, 2007).

The description of specific phenomena such as cash-for-work programmes or issues of displacement and resettlement, also figure in the literature (Rofi et al 2006; Doocy et al 2006; Harvey, 2006; Fernando and Hilhorst, 2006; Frerks and Klem 2005; Yamazaki and Yamazaki, 2011; Harvey, 2006). A whole series of observations have been documented regarding the effects of the tsunami, in relation to injury, trauma, memory, gender, age, orphanhood and single parenthood (Felten-Bierman, 2006; Youngs et al 2005; de Silva, 2006, Mendenhall, 2005, Simpson & de Alwis, 2006). My concern with process will, necessarily, cover many of these issues. I shall examine the importance of a long-term perspective in the concluding chapter.

A related theme is the attempt to combine relief efforts with the restructuring of institutions. Stirrat (2006) comments on the attempts of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to restructure the fishing industry, in Sri Lanka, in the aftermath of the tsunami. Uyangoda (2005) argues that in the Sri Lankan post-tsunami context, state reform should have been incorporated into relief and reconstruction. His suggestion is that a federal form of government, which he terms 'deep federalization', should have been introduced to the country. Reconstruction in the Gulf of Mexico, after hurricane Katrina, faced similar problems of whether to rebuild the old or start from scratch with the new. Although such events are an opportunity to construct new institutions and confront the issues which come up with them, Waugh and Smith (2006) state that there is a certain comfort in rebuilding the old. In the concluding chapter, I examine the extent to which relief shades into the restructuring of institutions, and into long-term development.

The disaster literature is, on the one hand, the product of those looking at a similar set of problems from different disciplinary backgrounds and, therefore, interests. There is concern with effect, damage and with the issues of reconstruction. Yet others, within the framework of their disciplines, attempt to disentangle the different layers of a disaster as

an event, and a disaster as a response. Anthropologists have their own interests. They are concerned, in a way that others are not, with culture and social process, as determinants of the disaster response, and also as factors which are influenced in a fundamental way by the disaster. A collection of articles edited by McGilvray & Gamburd (2010) is a good example of the interdisciplinary approach, in the sense of people writing from different disciplinary perspectives. However, some of the accounts in the disaster literature tend to be essentialised analyses of one dimension of a reality, taken out of context. In this sense, they are partial. Furthermore, there is the tendency for blanket statements which ‘flatten out’ the interesting dynamics of specific situations. An example is the theme that disasters emphasise great inequalities in society and that they worsen the socio-economic conditions of affected populations, en masse. There is here, in my view, some degree of misconception about the social dynamics of a disaster. In my research I seek to avoid these pitfalls by adopting an anthropological approach, i.e., an integrated, holistic one, to the analysis of this phenomenon.

Media

Another issue that is relevant to this study is the representation of this disaster by the media. By its very nature, the media is instrumental in the construction of post-disaster discourses (Dayan, 1992; Benthall, 1993). The post-tsunami context was framed in terms of a series of narratives relating to the blurring of audiences and constituencies; a ‘euphoria of togetherness’; ‘reconstruction’; ‘need’; ‘devastation’; ‘peace’; ‘development’; and, ‘ownership’. The media representation, by both the local media as well as the international one, was of a nation-wide phenomenon of national unity oriented towards recovery. Examples of this included the attempts by Catholic priests to bring succour to Buddhist communities and the protection of those belonging to the Muslim community, in temples, by Buddhists monks. As Button puts it: “The framing process both constructs and reconstructs meaning in a selective manner that legitimizes some accounts while obscuring others, privileging some political agendas and negating others.” (2002:146). The media, by its very nature, tends to ‘reduce’ a phenomenon to its ‘basic’ elements, thereby flattening out various nuances. News stories tend to be de-contextualized, such that the ‘meaning’ conveyed to the audience, is ‘partial’. A media report is but one of several possible representations of an event. The issue is the mediated, contested process by which *one representation* comes to be constituted as the

‘legitimate truth’: “A concern is ‘who has the power to define’”: dominant discourses work by setting up the terms of reference and by disallowing and marginalizing alternatives” (Shore and Wright:1997:18).

Furthermore, the media was very active in presenting tsunami-affected populations as falling, neatly, into the homogeneous, undifferentiated category of ‘the poor’. Any comparison of coastal populations, particularly those on the western coast, against those of the interior of the country, reveals the former as the more prosperous. Thus, the media representation was the construction of a mutual process of poverty alleviation and tsunami reconstruction.

There was a strong stress on democracy, with its attendant principles of accountability, good governance and transparency, as well as on minorities (Luthra:2005).³² Fund-raising events by the Sri Lankan diaspora in various countries received much prominence and moral approval, in the international media. Local interventions were marginalised.³³ Another narrative was the ‘human interest’ stories (Bindra, 2005; Mydans, 2004; Rohde, 2005). Gordon (2007) designates individuals taking photographs and sending them to the media, as eye witness accounts of disaster situations, as ‘citizen journalists’ and argues that disasters generate such people.

My particular concern is with the way in which the media pursued its chosen mandate, so that it could influence the policies of both the state as well as relief organisations and, ultimately, the impact of this on coastal communities.

Non-Governmental Organisations

Non-governmental organisations did not address the same problems in their relief and reconstruction efforts. Many organisations found themselves with a large volume of resources to disburse. However, together with this inflow of resources, were stipulations from donors about the rules and regulations which should guide their disbursement, the purposes for which they could be used and the type of target community to be assisted. The focus was, substantially, on physical reconstruction and in particular on housing. There also seemed to be little in the way of needs assessment by way of communication with tsunami affected populations, when it came to the development of relief strategies.

³² See BBC Correspondent, Dumeetha Luthra’s reports on the dynamic between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, post-tsunami. Source: www.bbc.co.uk Accessed 1 November 2006.

³³ See Wilhelm (2005) for an account of a local intervention.

The guiding principle appeared to be the desire to publicise results which were quick, visible and, very obviously, a success. As Davis puts it:

“The entire focus.... [has] been on *their* International NGO, *their* funding, *their* work, *their* logistics, *their* value and *their* problems. This narrow perception and introvert approach appeared to be underpinned with a tacit assumption that they were the best guardians of the interests of the disaster survivors, and not local communities, nor locally based NGOs, and certainly not the local or national government.” (2006:xiii).

As de Ville de Goyet & Moriniere (2006) state, some of these organisations treated the tsunami affected countries as ‘failed states’. Gaasbeek, for instance, is critical of this approach. In his writings he focuses attention on the local populations as well as the actions taken by government:

“I contend that three crucial aspects of the tsunami response have been misrepresented or ignored in the common discourses on the topic. First, the initial response in the East of Sri Lanka was actually effective and, though hectic, not chaotic. Many years of near-annual flooding and twenty years of violent conflict meant that most of those living in the East knew exactly what to do when they had to flee their houses. A pre-existing NGO co-ordination mechanism and efficient sharing of resources were in place; the government managed to restore roads and fuel and electricity supply within days; and the response capabilities of the various actors that were on the ground when the tsunami hit formed an almost natural symbiosis.” (2010:125-126).

The competition, between these organisations, for donor funds and for recipients upon whom to expend resources, in the most visible way possible, was severe (Simpson, 2007). Bindra (2005) has coined the phrase ‘competitive compassion’ to refer to this phenomenon. Stirrat (2006) makes the point that this competition had adverse effects on the efficiency and the effectiveness of relief disbursement. Koria (2009) makes a similar point about coordination, management and inefficiency.

Non-governmental organisations were interested in the implementation of relief programmes and in their positive representation by the media. The implementation had to be seen as quick, efficient and effective such that the organisations would be seen as important players on the stage. My interest is in the manner in which the scale and characteristics of the resources available, influenced interventions in these coastal communities and, ultimately, the implications of this for the social processes of these communities, Sinhapura in particular. I return to these concerns in Chapter 5.

The North and the East

The north and the east of Sri Lanka presented special problems, as far as relief and reconstruction were concerned, due to the on-going internal conflict. On the one hand, as Wickremasinghe (2006) states, the government had responsibility for the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of all tsunami affected citizens of Sri Lanka; on the other, the reality was that some areas of the north and the east were controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). An abortive attempt at resource-sharing between the LTTE and the government was attempted with the Post Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS). However, this agreement was abandoned and a solution acceptable to both the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE was not reached. Keenan (2010), for instance, has argued that 'tsunami recovery processes' served to redefine and exacerbate the pre-tsunami situation of conflict. Gamburd (2010) states that residents supported aid distribution to affected populations, in LTTE-controlled territories, with the caveat that the LTTE was an unsuitable organisation to disburse aid.

McGilvray & Gamburd (2010) state that a disaster is an opportunity, seldom taken, to set right conflicts in a society; the new resources that become available can be used as a lever in the resolution of on-going conflicts. They state that this opportunity was taken in Aceh, Indonesia, but not in Sri Lanka. According to Jemadu (2006), the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) unilaterally declared Aceh's independence from Indonesia in 1976. From then, until the tsunami in 2004, there was conflict between GAM and the Indonesian government with the military playing a critical role. An agreement was reached in August 2005 in Helsinki, Finland. The point, here, is that the difference in circumstances between the north and the east of Sri Lanka and Aceh, which Jemadu amongst others have pointed out, is not commented upon by McGilvray & Gamburd. Uyangoda (2005) is critical of the fact that the government and the LTTE failed to reach agreement as to how post-tsunami recovery should be handled. He does not, however, elaborate the reasons as to why the government and the LTTE failed to reach consensus, on the issue of reconstruction.

In the months after the tsunami there were statements, in a variety of fora, that the government had favoured the south and the west over the north and the east, for political reasons, in the disbursement of post-tsunami assistance (Kuhn, 2010). Equally,

there were comments that NGOs had favoured the north and the east, to counteract what they saw as the favouritism of the south by the government. The issue of proportions between the north and the south, and the ethnic politics that this might be thought to express, is not an issue with which this study is concerned. As this thesis is written on the basis of research on the south-western coast, I do not plan to examine the impact of the conflict on the disbursement of reconstruction funds. Nor do I make any attempts at comparison of the disbursement of aid, by both the state and other organisations, in the north and the east as opposed to the south and the west. However, the comments above have been made so as to put the problem in a national perspective.

In this section I have presented certain themes and issues by way of introducing this research. I have discussed some of the themes which have emerged in the course of my fieldwork, and others which have received attention in the literature. Further issues of interest relate to the culture and the social processes of the type of community that I have chosen to focus on, and to comparative matters leading from it. These themes will receive refinement and examination in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Outline

I now give a brief indication of the content of the seven chapters that follow. Chapter 1 is a description of the damage caused by the tsunami to the coastal regions of Sri Lanka; and the particular impact of the tsunami on Sinhapura. The chapter concludes with a comparison with other communities along the south-western coast.

In Chapter 2 I am concerned with the explication of my research problem, the theoretical framework of analysis which I have developed to address this problem, and the methodology that I used in the collection of data.

Chapter 3 examines the resources available to Sinhapura in the pre-tsunami period: fisheries; trade and employment; and, the political institutions which had an impact on the resources that were available to this community. The previous chapters have the essential function of providing a background as well as pointers to the way in which the pre-tsunami circumstances of the community can be understood. This chapter examines the social processes of Sinhapura at the time of the tsunami.

Chapter 4 is particularly concerned with the issues of entitlement, compensation and dispute mediation at the local level, generated by state policy and practice, in the aftermath of the disaster.

In Chapter 5 I examine the impact of non-governmental sources of assistance upon disaster-affected communities.

In Chapter 6 I illustrate, with many ethnographic examples, how different categories of people in Sinhapura responded to the circumstances in which they found themselves after the disaster. In this way, this chapter contrasts the pre-tsunami approach to resources, discussed in Chapter 3, with the situation that emerged in this respect, with the inflow of resources after the tsunami. It examines, therefore, the community's social processes in the face of this disaster.

In the concluding chapter, the Conclusion, I discuss the implications of this analysis for some of the issues and themes which have emerged as important in this study, including those which have been discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 1 -- The Tsunami and Sinhapura

This chapter seeks to provide the background in terms of which much of the discussion in later chapters becomes intelligible. What was the damage inflicted by the tsunami in general, countrywide, terms? Where did Sinhapura's particular experience fit into this picture along the south-western coast? In what way and to what extent was this influenced by the social processes in Sinhapura?

Tsunami Damage and Responses -- General

In the areas affected by the tsunami there were huge human and economic losses. The official government figure for the loss of life was 35,322.³⁴ There was the significant destruction of roads, bridges, and railway tracks with the consequent hampering of transport.³⁵ In the village of Thelwatte, a little to the north of Sinhapura, a train was swept off the track due to a particularly fierce tsunami wave. Besides this, the significant damage was to public, commercial, domestic and religious buildings (Lawrence, 2010). The immediate result of this was that people were rendered homeless, community activities could not be conducted and livelihoods were affected.³⁶

Food shortage, looting, water-bourne disease, and the lack of availability of drinking water are some of the phenomena which have been documented, in the aftermath of disasters. Jana (2005) states that in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands there was an urgent need for healthcare services and bottled drinking water, to prevent the imminent outbreak of disease: "Health is often the most critical issue during the initial emergency period after a disaster..." (Aeberhard:2008:17S). In Sri Lanka this was not the case. No pronounced health concerns were reported by affected communities.³⁷ Communities, inland, provided food, drinking water, medical assistance and temporary shelter. The other point of relevance is that no community in Sri Lanka is more than 30 kms from a government base hospital. Bosher's comment that "... the largest problems in Sri

³⁴ Source: Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) Report on the Tsunami.

³⁵ Although damage to the Galle Road was considerable, it was operational within two weeks.

³⁶ The Consumer Price Index rose by 3.98% and the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined. "Initial predictions that the tsunami would shave more than a percentage point from GDP growth proved excessively pessimistic, and in fact GDP growth increased from 5.4% in 2004 to 6% in 2005" (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2006). Source: Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) Report on the Tsunami. Citation and full details in the bibliography.

³⁷ This is based on interviews with the medical profession and on the visit of a Consultant Physician to Sinhapura, under the aegis of the Trust.

Lanka and India post-disaster event are associated with access to adequate health care facilities.” (2006:64), is inexplicable as it was well documented that this was not the case. Thus, widespread disease and shortage of water were not, primarily, the problems which had to be addressed.

As this was a disaster limited to coastal areas, the largest damage was to the fisheries industry. Bandara and Narampanawa (2007), state that there was a reduction of stock in the fisheries sector and that 50% of marine fisheries was completely destroyed. This rendered 100,000 fishermen, 80,000 fish traders and 20,000 workers, in ancillary services, jobless.³⁸ Other sectors of the economy such as trading, dependent on the volume of fishing, were also affected.

The other industry to be seriously affected by the tsunami was tourism, accounting for 10.8% of the estimated GDP of US \$ 18 billion of 2004.³⁹ The seaside resorts experienced extensive infrastructure damage as well as the loss of life. In the aftermath of the tsunami, with the sudden drop in tourist arrivals, these resorts operated at a 20% occupancy, in spite of the fact that many dropped their prices by 30-40% (Gupta, 2005). Furthermore, these resorts did not receive compensation from insurance as the damage caused by a tsunami was not within the compensation cover. There were a few ex gratia payments amounting to between Rs. 100,000/- to 200,000/- each.⁴⁰ However, the tourist industry recovered speedily for several reasons: the swift action of the government, with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka offering soft loans to tourist resorts for reconstruction; the deferment of the loan repayments of hotel owners; access to privately funded renovation programmes; the duty free importation of the material required for hotel refurbishment; aggressive marketing by the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB). Thus, many of the resorts affected by the tsunami were operational by February, 2005. Furthermore, the industry was kept afloat by aid workers and other groups who poured into the country and had to be accommodated. The 100m buffer zone which placed an embargo on rebuilding on the coastline, was not implemented in relation to the tourist resorts.

³⁸ Source: www.fisheries.gov.lk Accessed on 10 April 2007

³⁹ Post-tsunami, the tourism sector recorded a negative growth of 3%. There was a loss in earnings of 54.5%. Source: Annual Statistical Report 2005, Sri Lanka Tourist Board. www.sltbstatistics.org www.srilankantourism.org www.slmts.lk Accessed 10 April 2007

⁴⁰ Source: Discussion with Mr. Sooriyagoda, Head of the Planning and Development Division of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board, on 22/8/2008.

The impact of the disaster cut across socio-economic levels, caste, ethnicity and religion. In contrast to the point made by McGilvray and Gamburd (2010), disasters are not always profoundly discriminatory as will become apparent in future chapters. In Sri Lanka, the more affluent strata of society were affected as much as the poorer ones. However, one must qualify this statement by making the point that the affluent had a better capacity to recover, than the poor. It is women and children who were significantly affected by this disaster. This is because men were better able to run, swim and climb trees.⁴¹ In some coastal areas the men were out at sea, fishing, where they were safe from the tsunami waves.

It has been argued by many people, and in many different fora, that this widespread damage was not inevitable; that if Sri Lanka and, indeed, the Asian region had had an early warning system for such disasters, the massive loss of life might have been averted. Samarajiva (2005) states that while the advanced technology necessary for timely warning was available in the world, at the time of the tsunami, it was not readily available in Sri Lanka.

Many institutions and individuals responded to this disaster event: the communities affected by the catastrophe; neighbouring communities; the government; the UN and other international aid agencies; smaller non-governmental organisations, both international and local; the commercial sector; the media; local and foreign philanthropists acting in their individual capacities; and, ad hoc organisations assembled for the purpose of dealing with this crisis.

Response of Local Populations

Before the government or humanitarian organisations appeared on the scene, post-tsunami, the initial relief was provided by local populations in the form of food, clothing and shelter. These were communities, inland, which had close connections, of trade and marriage, with coastal communities. Domroes' comment, "...donations of government and private aid from all corners of the globe have poured in to Sri Lanka through innumerable organizations and individuals..." (2006:ix) marginalises the contributions of local populations, in the face of the disaster. This can be contrasted

⁴¹ Of those who received injuries in the High Street of Sinhapura 100% were women. My research in communities along the south-western coast corroborated the fact that women were disproportionately amongst those injured.

with Jana who states that: “A large number of people had devoted their attention and efforts to relief work and had been working ceaselessly.....since 26th December 2004 without any remuneration.” (2005:121). Domroes’ comment can also be contrasted with that of Jayasuriya & McCawley (2010) evaluating the tsunami dynamic in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia, in the course of a project commissioned by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). One of their major conclusions is that the initial emergency relief effort was a major achievement due, in large measure, to the spontaneous responses of local communities and national governments. This is echoed by Lal Mohan (2005) regarding the Kanyakumari coast in South India. Mulligan & Nadarajah (2012) commenting on the early responses of communities to the interior of those affected by the tsunami, state that this response was remarkable for a country that was in no way prepared to face this disaster.

The local police, Buddhist temples, Christian churches and Islamic mosques also played a significant role in providing succour. Furthermore, private individuals and the commercial sector organised convoys of aid to the affected areas. In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, when there was little coordination of the relief effort, aid tended to be focused on visibly affected, large towns by-passing the smaller communities on the south-western coast, such as Sinhapura.

Response of the State

The government’s response came into effect within a week of the tsunami. The Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN) was established on 3 January 2005, directly under the control of the President.⁴² It was the central body for coordinating, and implementing, all tsunami-related activities.⁴³ Under the aegis of TAFREN programmes of relief were established, and compensation disbursed to affected populations through the lower tiers of the bureaucracy.⁴⁴ These programmes were under the coordination of the District and Divisional Secretariat, at the regional level. It was the Technical Officer (TO) of the Divisional Secretariat who assessed damage to housing and gave a certificate authorising compensation. The Grama Niladhari (GN) was the village level official who followed through the chain of command from the District Secretary,

⁴² TAFREN appears to be similar to the Integrated Relief Command (IRC) which was set up for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (Jana, 2005).

⁴³ This organization was, subsequently, dismantled and the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) took over its functions.

⁴⁴ These schemes are discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

through the Divisional Secretary, to the village. The sums of cash were disbursed through the Samurdhi Bank and the items of food, such as dry goods, through the co-operative.⁴⁵ The Fisheries Inspector, the local official of the Department of Fisheries, assessed boat damage and issued temporary Identity Cards on the basis of which fishermen received compensation.

The officials of the central administration were the important actors on the reconstruction 'stage'. It was through them that state assistance flowed to those affected by the tsunami. The Grama Niladhari, the Technical Officer, officials of the Samurdhi Bank and of the cooperative movement, officials of the Divisional and District Secretariat became decision-makers and, therefore, important persons in this context. Furthermore, a document certifying tsunami damage from the government was necessary to obtain any assistance from relief organisations. It can be seen that quite apart from disbursing government relief the bureaucracy was central, in mediating between tsunami affected populations and those humanitarian organisations providing relief. In these circumstances, except in an ad hoc manner, the resources of government did not flow into disaster affected communities through the Members of Parliament (MPs), nor through the representatives of local government.

The government's accountability to tsunami affected populations had many dimensions. It could not, for instance, mark off its spheres of responsibility in the way that other organisations could, and did, do. The government had to rehabilitate the two major industries which were devastated -- fisheries and tourism -- mobilise banks and insurance companies; deal with the special problems of the north and the east; and, navigate the myriad legal considerations which arise in situations of this sort. Furthermore, it had to find land for new housing in areas where unused land was not freely available. There was little in the way of state-owned land on which to commence construction, in the vicinity of the coastal areas. This meant that land had either to be acquired from private sources, or state-owned plantations in the interior, had to be levelled, preparatory to the construction of housing. Acquisition of private land is a long

⁴⁵ The Samurdhi movement was initiated as a poverty alleviation programme for households below a certain minimum income. A bank was established as part of this movement. The Cooperative movement, which has a long history in Sri Lanka, has, at various points, figured prominently in the equitable distribution of scarce food stuffs. In the immediate post-tsunami period it was called upon to play a similar role.

and tedious process. Furthermore, such acquisitions may be challenged in the courts of law as an infringement of fundamental rights.⁴⁶

The government also faced the challenge of the management of large amounts of aid flowing into the country, in the aftermath of the tsunami. Although not all amounts which were pledged were delivered, the volume of aid was still unprecedented.⁴⁷ The main problem that the government faced was the widespread view that the line ministries could not be relied upon to deliver goods and services to affected people, as intended by the design of relief programmes. The belief in the integrity of the public service was, at this point, at an 'all time' low: "Successive governments have weakened the fabric of the public service by liberal dispensation of political patronage." (Editorial, *The Sunday Island*, 21/06/2009). Vethasiromony (2005) makes the point, for the Kanyakumari coast in South India, that if an administrative system does not operate well in normal times it will not respond well to the extreme and special needs of a disaster. The government, therefore, found itself in a dilemma. On the one hand, confidence in the ability of the central administration to handle relief was low. On the other, there was even less confidence in local government institutions, as the device through which this should be done. Finally, the government opted for the disbursement of relief through the central administration, with TAFREN, and subsequently the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) playing a strong monitoring role. All this was not conducive to quick decision-making, nor to the efficient delivery of aid.

The Sri Lankan experience may be contrasted with the approach of the Gujarat government, in India, after the earthquake in 2001. Simpson states:

"...in the aftermath.....as I have described it, the state began to impinge on freedoms and autonomy. It took an iron grip by divesting people of property and their property rights and investing heavily in a superabundance of new bureaucracy, which was often uncertain of its proper relationship with the pre-existent bureaucracy." (2005:238).

⁴⁶The Sri Lankan government's post-tsunami relief and rehabilitation work, at the local level, is discussed in Chapter 4.

⁴⁷ It was the case that, overall, only a third of the aid that was promised, in the aftermath of the tsunami, was received by Sri Lanka (Source: RADA). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) states that of a total of US \$ 2.5 billion of emergency aid pledged by government donors, some 21% (US\$ 0.55 billion) remained uncommitted nearly 18 months after the tsunami, in June 2006 (Telford and Cosgrave, 2007).

This did not happen in Sri Lanka. There was neither heavy investment by the state nor was there a radical change in the bureaucracy. Although RADA and TAFREN were directly under the President, they did not arrogate to themselves rights which disturbed the existing bureaucracy, or the property rights of individuals. While a buffer zone was initially imposed, and building within this zone was prohibited, there was no change in the ownership of land.⁴⁸ It must be noted, though, that the approach followed in Gujarat related to a specific well-demarcated area, unlike in Sri Lanka, where the affected area was a narrow strip along two-thirds of its coastline. It is interesting to note that in the Sri Lankan context it was relief organisations, both international and national, which went into recruitment over-drive. Harris (2006), for instance, has commented on the negative impact of this, when he states that the recruitment and human resources development practices of relief agencies, in the face of disaster, are inappropriate, as well as being insensitive to the disaster response needs of affected populations.

In Sri Lanka, disaster response and management has never been a critical element in national planning. Gandhi writing about India states that: “Although our country has been subjected to natural disasters from time to time, these have never been adequately factored into our planning process. By and large, we have taken the approach that these events are transient in nature and, therefore, can be addressed as and when they arise.” (Gandhi: 2007: 44-45). The situation has been similar in Sri Lanka. Minor natural disasters are frequent, but they had never been integrated into policy. The tsunami was on a scale which far exceeded that of other natural disasters.

Response of Relief Organisations

Relief organisations, including those of the UN system and prominent Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) set up their own programmes.⁴⁹ Many organisations concentrated on the construction of housing, both temporary and

⁴⁸ The discussion of the buffer zone, and the implications of this imposition, are discussed in Chapter 4.

⁴⁹ The organisations of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) were active in post-tsunami relief and reconstruction in Sri Lanka. The organisations are: CARE International, World Vision, Help the Aged, Islamic Relief, Oxfam, CARE Int. UK, Concern, Save the Children, the British Red Cross, Tearfund, Merlin, Christian Aid, CAFOD, ActionAid. Source: www.dec.org Accessed 10 November 2007.

permanent. There were others which were involved in immediate relief. It is only a few organisations which assisted in the restoration of livelihoods, apart from fisheries. Major donors released large sums to NGOs, both local and international, which, thereby, became the conduit through which these funds reached the affected communities.⁵⁰

A significant feature of the post-tsunami context was the role of microfinance organisations. In the new circumstances which developed after the tsunami, with a severe shortage of capital, the opportunities for lending agencies expanded greatly. Thus, these organisations either multiplied their existing programmes or started new initiatives. Other organisations ventured into microfinance as a new and, as it turned out, lucrative venture.

Response of Tsunami-affected Populations

The tsunami affected populations exhibited a variety of reactions. There were two main themes of recrimination. One, was that some who had lost ‘everything’, had not got ‘anything’. The other, was that some who had not lost ‘anything’ managed, through unscrupulous means, to secure substantial sums of money and other benefits. The redistribution of resources, in some instances, was such that those who had had little hope of improving their circumstances, in the normal course of events, now had access to such resources as enabled them to achieve a lifestyle which they could not have aspired to under normal circumstances. The anger directed at relief agencies and the institutions of government seemed to arise from the fact that they were seen, by those who did not benefit from these sources of aid, as the ‘architects’, of an ‘unjust’ redistribution of resources. There was also the feeling amongst the fishing component of these coastal communities that, as a group, their loss was greater than that of any other section of society and that it is *they* who were, primarily, entitled to compensation. This was a position that they pursued aggressively, in a variety of fora such as meetings with government agents and NGO representatives.⁵¹ The poor felt that the more affluent members of society had other avenues of recovery, and that government and humanitarian aid should be reserved, primarily, for them.

⁵⁰ Source: interviews with several NGOs, both local and foreign.

⁵¹ These themes are expanded, with ethnographic examples, in both Chapters 4 and 5.

Response of Financial Institutions

For a period of six months after the tsunami all commercial banks provided special loan facilities to expedite the recovery process. In order to secure a loan, a police report certifying tsunami damage was necessary. The Commercial Bank of Ceylon, PLC instituted the *Susahana* Loan Scheme which entailed loans at 6% interest, with a one year interest free grace period. In January 2005 one of the Trustees, met the top management of the Commercial Bank, which was operating in the south-western region, regarding potential loans for the tsunami-affected in Sinhapura. He was told that while the bank was prepared to implement the loan scheme at the suggestion of the government, for a short period, they would, thereafter, have to revert to normal banking practice and to give loans only where these were well-secured. The majority of Sinhapura fell into the category of high risk borrowers. The officials further observed that the pursuit of defaulters, in the event of non-repayment of loans, would be very bad from a public relations point of view, for the bank. At this point the banks were trying to work out schemes whereby they would lend to local organisations such as village level associations which would, then, take the responsibility for repayment. In the event, no scheme which was regarded as viable by the banks, and helpful by potential borrowers, was formulated. The banks did not lend to borrowers in this high risk category, in the normal course of banking, and saw little reason to do so in times of catastrophe. The Bank of Ceylon had initiated a scheme of loans for fishermen in 1975, but in early 2005 when the fishermen were in dire need of capital for the restoration of this industry this scheme was little in evidence. It was revived in 2011, by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, in terms of the *Diyavara Diriya* Scheme.⁵² The idea was to promote self-employment activities amongst fishing families: coir, the production of local food, aquatic plants, ornamental fish, ready-made garments, fish-based products and handicrafts.⁵³

The manager of the Galle branch of the Commercial Bank told me, in 2005, that the *Susahana* loans were given to established entrepreneurial ventures, with a good credit history, in a context where loans tended to be regarded as grants. The maximum tsunami loan was Rs. 5 million. The manager of the Hikkaduwa branch stated that they

⁵² Source: 'Bank of Ceylon honours Fisheries Sector with Diyavara Diriya' in *The Island*, 31/07/2011.

⁵³ Source: 'Loans to Fishermen to Start Self-Employment Projects' by Don Asoka Wijewardena in *The Island* 17/09/2011.

had given Rs 250 million worth of tsunami loans. The money came from international donor agencies. It is through the Central Bank of Sri Lanka that these monies were channelled to the commercial banks. Some NGOs used the bank to facilitate the disbursement of resources.⁵⁴

While there was a certain fatalistic acceptance of the position taken by the banks there was, clearly, the feeling that long-standing customers had been somewhat cavalierly treated. The response was to turn to the institutions of microfinance, and to informal sources such as kin and personal connections. It is those tsunami affected customers of the banks whose credit history was satisfactory who were able to borrow large sums from the banks, for the rehabilitation of their entrepreneurial ventures, even though their incomes had been drastically curtailed.

Response of Insurance Companies

Most insurance policies in Sri Lanka did not cover earthquakes which are the cause of tsunamis. Thus, companies were not liable, in a strictly legal sense. What they did, is to make some ex gratia payments of approximately 10%, largely, for the purposes of public relations.⁵⁵ This had the effect of making coastal populations wonder whether insurance, about which they had had doubts anyway, was of any use as a safeguard against a disaster of this nature in the future.

Capitalist Development

The capitalist development in the context of disasters, highlighted by Klein (2007), clearly did not take place on the south-western coast of Sri Lanka. This might have been because of the difficulties of regional redevelopment, because nowhere did the narrow strip of land affected by the tsunami constitute a region, where the redevelopment could be planned on a geographical or on an administrative basis. The only place where this

⁵⁴ Source: Personal communication with Mrs. Firdhouse Ameer, Manager, Commercial Bank, Galle Branch on 30/6/2008

⁵⁵ Source: Personal communication with Mr. Sanjay Seneviratne, Head of Personal Insurance, Senaratne Associates (Now Senaratne Insurance Brokers), Liberty Plaza, Colombo 3 on 03/07/2008.

was possible was in Hambanthota where there was already a plan for the development of the town, its harbour and environs.⁵⁶

This section has been a discussion of the type of damage that Sri Lanka suffered as a result of the tsunami, and the responses to this damage by the various actors in this drama. It is about the nature of the resources that were lost, the new resources that were sought, and how these were obtained. The next section describes the context of Sinhapura, as a precursor to the description of the damage suffered by Sinhapura, which comes thereafter. What type of community is it? What is its geographical context? What is its composition in terms of caste, ethnicity and religion? What role has education played in widening its economic opportunities, and in strengthening its influence in the region? In all these respects, how does Sinhapura compare with the communities of this coast, particularly with those immediately to its north and its south?

The Context of Sinhapura

I shall now describe those aspects of Sinhapura which have to be understood if the material presented in the chapters which follow is to be meaningful.

In Sinhapura, somewhat to the interior of the Galle Road there is a river. The strip of land between the Galle Road and the river, constitutes the landside of the community. There is, therefore, no village immediately to the interior with which Sinhapura has a 'special' relationship, in contrast with many other coastal villages. The land between the Galle Road and the sea constitutes the four neighbourhoods where the fishing families live. There is an inlet where the boats are berthed which forms a natural harbour. The landside is comprised of two neighbourhoods, although these are more amorphous than the well-demarcated ones of the seaside.

In ethnic terms Sinhapura is Sinhalese, except for one Tamil family, with a population of a little over three thousand.⁵⁷ The cultural idiom of Buddhism, as a philosophy and as a way of life, and the ideas of Sinhala Nationalism, are central in the construction of its

⁵⁶ The organised expansion of capital and infrastructure in the aftermath of the tsunami may have, to a certain extent, taken place on the east coast of Sri Lanka. However, I made no specific examination of the east coast as this was beyond the purview of my study.

⁵⁷ The population in Sinhapura, in February 2005, was 2236. The number of households was 544. Of this 235 were on the seaside, 230 on the landside and 79 on the High Street. Source: The Grama Niladhari's list as well as the survey conducted by the Trust.

worldview (Gombrich & Obeyesekere, 1988). Through a variety of 'rituals of unity' this community presents itself, to itself and to others, as a community of 'good' Buddhists (Spencer, 1990). Historically, the Buddhist temple has provided the normative base of the society: the corpus of rules, backed by the values and beliefs of Buddhist thought. Thus, the temple is at the centre of village life. However, a conflict over the succession of the chief incumbent monk of the temple, a few years prior to the tsunami, had the effect of 'tarnishing' the temple as the wellspring of the moral domain in the eyes of the community. The rifts created during this episode had not healed completely at the time of the tsunami. The result was that the temple did not have a congregation which had a strong core of members who participated in all its activities. It had, instead, different groups of people who undertook the different ritual activities associated with the temple: a situation of transitory involvement.

Caste

In order to comprehend the social dynamics of caste in Sinhapura, and indeed in the region, it is necessary to understand something about caste in Sri Lanka. There are differences between the Tamil and the Sinhalese populations of the north and the south. The caste picture of the Tamil north is different in composition, in rules of interaction and in such matters as access to Hindu temples. In the south, there are differences in caste composition and interaction between the interior of the country and the southern and western coastline. In the interior, in most villages, the majority caste is the Govigama, whose traditional occupation has been farming. It is regarded in these villages, as well as by the country as a whole, as the caste of the highest rank. This can be contrasted with India where, in most places, the highest ranked caste is not the majority caste. The Govigama comprise about seventy percent of the Sinhalese community in the interior and the rest (30%) of the population belong to castes whose function has been, historically, to provide various services to the whole community (Ryan, 1953; Leach, 1960; Senaratne, 1970; Seneviratne, 1997; Gunasekara, 1994; Furer-Haimendorf, 1966; Yalman, 1967).

On the coastline, the picture is markedly different. There are single caste and, occasionally, multi caste villages dotted along the southern and western coastline. These communities have been, historically, single caste although they have sometimes been

grouped into a heterogeneous unit for administrative purposes. This can be contrasted with interior villages which are often multi caste, with land providing a substantial percentage of income (Senaratne, 1970). On the coast, the Karava, the Salagama and the Durava castes are the ones which are found most frequently, engaged in fishing, the collection and sale of toddy, in the coir industry, cinnamon peeling and a variety of entrepreneurial activities. Their numbers, compared to the totality of the Sinhalese population are small -- approximately ten percent. These castes are of relatively recent Indian origin, the migrations beginning in the 15th century. The high rank of the Govigama is disputed by these three castes some of whom, in their single caste communities, have little or no interaction with the Govigama. An inter-caste marriage is a common occasion on which these rankings become significant. It is a matter of constant negotiation with regard to the attainment of status. In those communities comprised of more than one caste, there is a certain amount of caste interaction in the course of which issues of ranking lead to conflict (Leach, 1960; Yalman, 1967; Senaratne, 1970). However, inter-caste conflicts on the coastline are, largely, inter-village conflicts. These conflicts relate to boundaries, to marriage, to the control of temple resources, to the provision of services and to fishing rights in the form of access to the beach. The arbiters of these conflicts are often the political authorities beyond the village. Thus, these conflicts unfold on the political stage in this region.

The south-western coastal region was one of the areas of the country which benefitted from the enterprise shown by missionaries in the 19th century, in establishing educational institutions. This was, in fact, part of a wider policy followed by the colonial government to create a cadre of people who could fill the positions of a bureaucracy which was expanding at that time (Kannangara, 2011; Jayantha, 1990; Roberts, 1982). In time, the proportion of educated people from this region, employed by the government, was markedly higher than the rest of the country. This educated segment of society was drawn, largely, from the three prominent coastline castes. It is in this context, and in terms of this education, that these castes regarded themselves as differentiated from the interior, and as the equal of the Govigama. Since the 1850s the

Karava have challenged the Govigama at the national level, in terms of leadership in public affairs (Jayawardena, 2002).⁵⁸

Sinhapura is a single caste village comprised of the Karava caste. One part of the community has, traditionally, engaged in fishing while trade has been the province of the other.⁵⁹ To the immediate south of Sinhapura is the community of Kotigama belonging to the Salagama caste.⁶⁰ Oral traditions abound of conflicts relating to fishing and the temple, between Sinhapura and Kotigama. During the dispute over the succession, in the temple, the people of Kotigama who were devotees of this temple supported the non-Karava candidate. With regard to fishing, the controversies have been over the access to the beach. The beach in Sinhapura, is not considerable. Claims by Kotigama to a part of this beach have not, therefore, been at all acceptable. Another bone of contention has been various attempts by the two villages to appropriate to themselves governmental institutions such as local government offices, courts of law and the regional police. Thus, the main conflict between Sinhapura and Kotigama, in caste terms, has been over public institutions. It can be seen, therefore, that caste unity is a function of inter-caste relations and has much to do with identity and the control of resources. Notwithstanding this history of conflict, in more recent years, since the 1970s, there has been an uneasy peace between the two communities. This is because some of the conflicts such as those over the siting of the police station and the TC have been resolved. Within Sinhapura, as in many other single caste villages, the large percentage of disputes of a day-to-day character are intra-village and intra-caste.

Kotigama has benefitted from the inflow of resources from members of the Salagama caste, resident in urban centres. The Sinhapura position is different. Sinhapura benefitted, early on in the 20th century, from the educational facilities which were available in the large towns both to its north and its south. Many received a good education at the secondary level, attained skills, secured employment, and left the village. Over the years the migration from Sinhapura has been substantial: to Colombo and other urban areas, to the hill country, as well as to countries like Australia, the USA

⁵⁸ This account is based on conversations with members of my family and also with senior residents of the south-western coastline, many of whom drew on their own family histories in responding to my queries.

⁵⁹ To be contrasted with Norr's (1975) account of Tamil Nadu where she states that in South India, fishing is performed by a single caste, of low status.

⁶⁰ Kotigama is the pseudonym that I use for this village.

and the UK. The inflow of remittances, however, from these migrants has been negligible.⁶¹ The explanation of this is the fact that in the majority of cases the whole family has migrated. Thus, they have maintained little connection with Sinhapura and had no necessity to send remittances back.

The Economy

In Sinhapura, for about half a kilometre the Galle Road becomes the commercial hub of the community, the High Street. It is a common perception in the village that the prosperity of all, is dependent on the volume of fishing. It is, in fact, a mutually dependent relationship between fishing and trade. In addition to this there is some small-scale manufacturing and the provision of services such as carpentry, plumbing and electrical work. The economy is also fed through external employment in the larger towns of the region, as well as through employment in the government sector.⁶²

Furthermore, there are a variety of cottage crafts which provide supplementary income to households. The main cottage craft is the coir industry which has, for two or three centuries, been the province of women and which is distinguished from 'newer' craft industries. The Coir Factory is situated on the seaside and produces, principally, coir matting.

From the early 19th century Sinhapura has had a diversified economy. There was trade with selected areas of southern India in a specialised type of cured fish called *jadi*, the trade in gems and the participation in the expanding plantation industry both in the hinterland of Galle and in the central hills of the country. As a result of these activities when the time came, in the 1960s and 1970s, for the innovations in the technology of fishing sponsored by the government, the community had within it enough capital to invest in the new technology. This is in contrast to some of the other communities on this coast which continued to fish in the old mode, without mechanising their craft, without nylon nets and without multi-day boats.

⁶¹ The role of caste in the distribution of resources will be discussed in some depth in Chapter 3.

⁶² Employment in the government sector is a preferred form of service, although salaries are low, as there is security of tenure and a pension at the end of working life.

In the 1950s Sinhapura practised the '*theppan*' type of fishing.⁶³ From this, there was a shift to large wooden outrigger canoes or *wallams* as they are referred to, locally. In the late 1960s these *wallams* had outboard engines fitted to them and, eventually, the *wallams* themselves came to be constructed from fibreglass. Nylon nets were also introduced, at around this time, and after some initial resistance by the fishermen, came into widespread use.

The south-west monsoon on this coast confines fishing to about six months of the year: the period called the *haraya* which is from October to April. May to September is referred to as the *varakan* period, by the fishermen, when the sea is stormy and fishing is difficult. In these lean months, the fishermen engage in fish drying activities, inshore fishing using small canoes, and occasionally, coir rope making.

In the late 1970s with the new technology and other factors, such as the availability of credit and the improvements in services and infrastructure, coming together, there was a boom in fishing incomes. There were several implications of this in Sinhapura. One of these was a high degree of investment back again in the fishing industry, as well as in other ventures. The repayment of the debt of this investment was facilitated by the fishing boom. One of my best informants, Gunasena, told me that he bought his *wallam* on loan in November 1980 and that by February 1981, i.e., four months later, he had repaid the loan which covered the full cost of the *wallam*. There was an immediate effect on the businesses of the High Street. There was a boom here as well. The pattern amongst the fishing community and the High Street was to access credit, make this credit 'work' for them, repay the loan, and start the cycle again.

The fishing community and those involved in trade, invested in superior fishing crafts and equipment; in vehicles such as lorries, buses and three wheelers; and in the purchase of real estate in inland villages. They also invested, in an increasingly intensive manner, in the education of their sons and daughters. The educational facilities which were available in the large towns of this region, beyond the village, involved a significant expenditure. This led to employment, beyond the village, both in government and in the commercial sector. What the entrepreneurs of this community did not invest in, was community development. They were not interested in the

⁶³ The '*theppan*' is a traditional craft which is made out of logs lashed together.

contribution to the improvement of community facilities such as the two schools and the library.⁶⁴ The result has been that community facilities in Sinhapura are poor. Neither of the schools are of a level of academic excellence, which caters to the demands of those students who wish to pursue their education beyond the secondary level. Such students and their parents make every effort to enrol in the bigger schools of Galle and Ambalangoda.

Another implication of this economic climate is that there was a change in the organisation of fishing. Boats began to be owned by people who did not necessarily go to sea themselves, for instance the High Street traders. The *wallams* had a crew of seven or eight who worked on the basis of a share of the income of the boat, on a given day. This gave them a freedom which allowed them to change to another boat should conditions turn out to be unsatisfactory. The routes of mobility from ancillary workers to crew members to boat owners also became more accessible.

Altogether, there was an expansion in the village economy. An important feature of this new economy was the way in which credit was a 'lubricant' for growth, both the formal as well as the informal systems characteristic of communities of this type.⁶⁵ Individuals had recourse to a variety of credit sources, both formal and informal.⁶⁶ Four or five branches of well known national banks were within easy reach of the village. Yet, at this time, it was not possible to get loans easily from these institutions unless one had been an account holder for a period of time, and was willing to provide unimpeachable collateral. In these circumstances, with economic activity increasing in volume and with the availability of credit from formal sources not expanding correspondingly, the informal, local, systems of credit began to fill the breach. Those who had spare capital and who felt they could exercise the necessary controls to recover this capital, gradually became money-lenders. There were those who ran businesses on the High Street who lent money, as a supplementary business as well as to facilitate sales. There were others,

⁶⁴ One of the schools is one of the earliest Buddhist schools to be established in the south.

⁶⁵ As Pollnac (1985) points out, the Sinhapura fishermen prefer the informal credit system. If at all possible they avoid banks and other financial institutions.

⁶⁶ There is an interesting contrast, here, with Ambakandawila where Stirrat (1988, 1989) states that the credit arrangements are interest free and reciprocal. In the case of Sinhapura, local credit is extended on the basis of very high interest and reciprocity is not guaranteed.

among whom were quite a few women, who loaned money to 'known' people -- *danna minissu*.

Although banking services have been freely available in the region for many years -- Hikkaduwa has the People's Bank, the Bank of Ceylon, the Commercial Bank and the National Savings Bank -- the fishermen have been chary of utilising these services. The tremendous variation of income and, therefore, the difficulty of repayment of loans according to a schedule, has had much to do with this. As far as the small entrepreneurs are concerned, in the 1980s and the 1990s there were strong attempts by the banks to get their custom. After the default of many loans, however, and the realisation, by the banks, that recovery through the legal process is complex, there has been a curtailment of these easy loans. What has stepped into the place of this lacuna is the microfinance loan.⁶⁷ As far as insurance is concerned, although limited facilities were available, through the governmental system, most boat owners did not feel that expenditure on this count was worthwhile. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that insurance is available for the boats, the crew and the engines but not for nets, although these are often as expensive to replace. This perception of the boat owners has, of course, changed after the experience of the tsunami, when the perils of the lack of insurance were starkly revealed.

From the 1920s when there was an Excise office and it was a port for the trade with India, Sinhapura had a certain importance in the region. In the 1970s, however, Sinhapura lost this position to Hikkaduwa. This has had much to do with Hikkaduwa's growth as a centre of tourism. In part, this was the loss of its place as the centre for local government and for institutions of law and order such as the police. The immediate result was that the inflow of resources through political and administrative channels became considerably less than before.

Thus, the situation in Sinhapura, before the tsunami, was that fishermen were using a variety of credit mechanisms to access new technology and increase income, which had implications for social position. They were able to utilise these opportunities due to the high levels of income, from fishing, which made the repayment of steep interest, feasible. This was a community, therefore, in transition, venturing from fishing into

⁶⁷ Microfinance is the credit available to small enterprises in small communities which do not have access to commercial credit due, largely, to the lack of collateral. This credit is usually supplied by non-governmental organisations.

other activities. Thus, compared to the 1950s, the profile of Sinhapura's economy had changed considerably. Fishing now contributed to a much larger share of the total income than before. Coir rope making had declined to the extent, that it was marginal to the economy. The High Street businesses provided goods and services of a type unknown half a century previously.

At the time of the tsunami, the fishing industry in Sinhapura had the following character: 60 *wallams*, operating with outboard engines which fish at a distance of 5-6 kilometres from the shore; 15 small outrigger canoes, for inshore fishing; and, 15 multi-day boats, used for deep-sea fishing, which had been promoted by the government in the 1990s, which were berthed in the harbours of Galle or Hikkaduwa.⁶⁸ The main actors on this stage were the boat owners, sometimes also acting as skippers of their boats; the crew; the traders from whom provisions and fuel was purchased; ancillary workers such as those who assist in drawing the boats onto the beach; the fish traders and merchants; the itinerant traders of fish; boat makers; and, those who repaired damaged nets. Then, at one remove, were the officials of the Department of Fisheries, the Fisheries' Co-operatives and the scientific community.⁶⁹

There were also a variety of fishing methods: night fishing using the night net; course fishing which is a daytime activity and uses the course net; inshore fishing in canoes; the use of the *athanguwa*.⁷⁰ The division of the profit differed between night fishing and the course method: in the case of the former, half the profit went to the owner of the boat and the rest was split between the crew; in the case of the latter, it was only two-fifths of the profit which was the rightful share of the owner. The multi-day boats were involved in three types of fishing: the log-centred fisheries, environmentally wasteful but highly profitable; the long line method; and, the 'gill' net or the *maha dala*. Of the 544 households in Sinhapura 291 were involved in the fishing industry in one capacity or another.

⁶⁸ Multi-day boats are used for deep-sea fishing and can remain at sea for a month, or more, at a time.

⁶⁹ The local representative of the Department of Fisheries is the Fisheries' Inspector. The Fisheries' Inspector represents the services provided by the government to fishing communities, at the local level. These services are: the registration of boats; provision of insurance; handling complaints; the apprehension of those practising illegal methods of fishing such as the use of dynamite. See Stirrat (1988) for an account of fishermen's connections with the state in western Sri Lanka.

⁷⁰ This is a piece of equipment like a very large tea strainer. It is used during night fishing when the net has been laid and the fishermen are waiting for the fish to be trapped.

The sale of the fish was by auction on the beach, in the early morning. Fishermen sold their wares, principally, to the big merchants from the towns such as Ambalangoda and Balapitiya or to their agents. These merchants had their middle men in places such as Colombo and Kandy to which this fish was usually transported. A small percentage of the catch was sold to the itinerant traders present at the auction. The fishermen were quite 'hard-headed' when it came to the issue of pricing. However, long-term relationships with traders was also important. There were two important fish merchants in Sinhapura. A fairly recent innovation at the time, in 2004, was the use of mobile phones to send messages from boats at sea to fish traders waiting on the beach and, sometimes, those even further away in Colombo and Kandy.⁷¹ Thus, the sale of fish was accomplished, on occasion, even before the boat had come back to land. In this way this technology could affect the price of a category of fish even in far away Colombo. In fact, it was emphasised to me time and time again, by several fishermen, that a mobile phone was a necessity, not a luxury, in current day fisheries.

There were some savings societies in the village. Those who joined these societies did so because they expected a fairly direct, personal financial benefit. There were also many who saw this as a low status activity and gave it a wide berth. The members were, almost entirely, women. While the men maintained the fiction that this was a supplementary income, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, what emerged in the course of my research is that these savings societies were very important to the village economy.

The Political Context

Sinhapura is situated within a particular political and administrative context. It belongs to more than one political constituency. It elects members to different political bodies at the local, regional and national levels -- for instance, the Provincial Council (PC), at the provincial level, the parliamentary system at the national level and the Urban Council (UC) and Pradeshiya Sabha (PS) at the local level.⁷² One of the avenues through which resources reached the village was through the political institutions of the region. Under the 13th Amendment to the Constitution the central government made a quantum of resources available to local areas. The use of these resources were to be

⁷¹ In addition to Colombo, Kandy is also a distribution centre for this region.

⁷² To be expanded in Chapter 3.

planned and managed by institutions, some of which like the Urban Council (UC) were already in existence, and others like the PC and the PS were established as part of this Amendment. In relation to Sinhapura the significant institutions have been the Hikkaduwa UC and the Kotigama PS. The control of access to resources in these two institutions is largely a matter of caste politics.⁷³

The Seaside and the Landside

There has been, and continues to be, a geographical, as well as a notional cleavage between the fishing families on the seaside, and those uninvolved in fishing, on the landside. The latter have occupations and a lifestyle which is quite different from fishing households. This resonates with the social grouping of Ambakandawila (on the western coast, north of Colombo), which comprises the *wella kattiya* (beach dwellers) and the *gamgoda kattiya* (landside dwellers) (Stirrat, 1988). Those on the landside see themselves as ‘educated’, ‘religious’ and living a ‘moral’ life. In contrast, they see the fishing households as ‘dissolute’, ‘irreligious’ and ‘sinful’, rough and uncouth. Their view is that fishermen engage in the ‘sinful’ endeavour of killing fish, which goes against the basic tenets of Buddhism.

The fishermen of Sinhapura manipulate various ideologies to contest their designated position in the moral domain. This is similar to Ram’s (1990) account of the way that the Mukkuvar community, in India, negotiates their designated ‘low’ position in the Hindu caste hierarchy, through an alliance with Catholicism, on the one hand, and through the representation of a ‘glorious past’ on the other. In Sinhapura the fishermen participate, regularly, in the ritual activities at the *devale*. They do a *devol maduwa* once a year to propitiate the gods (Acheson, 1981).⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that while this notion of ‘sin’ comes from Buddhist thought, the ritual response is directed towards a pantheon of gods drawn from both Buddhist and Hindu cultural contexts. There is a parallel, here, with Norr’s (1975) account of Minakuppam where fishing is regarded as ‘dirty’, as ‘polluted’, in terms of the purity and pollution dichotomy of the Hindu

⁷³ The dynamic between caste and politics is one that I shall explore in some depth in Chapter 3.

⁷⁴ A *devol maduwa* takes place at the *devale*, which is a centre of for the worship and propitiation of the gods. It is conducted by the *kapurala* who is the relevant ritual practitioner. The purpose is to give thanks for good fortune in the previous year, to propitiate the gods, and to seek their protection in the coming year. All those engaged in fishing make some contribution towards the expenses that are incurred.

cultural context. It also resonates with Ram's (1990) account of the Mukkuvar community, who are seen as belonging to a 'polluting' caste due to the fact that their occupation deals with 'flesh food'. The point, in Sinhapura, is that this issue is framed, not within the Hindu caste idiom of purity and pollution, but within the Buddhist idiom of the 'moral', and its anti-thesis. There is also the contrast in that, unlike in South India, these fishermen belong to a high caste.

The fishermen feel that their endeavour is the pivot upon which the village economy revolves and that, therefore, they are worthy of respect. They see themselves as a group who earn well and spend well: on food, clothing and gold (Stirrat, 1988). They are independent; individualistic; characterized by strength, virility, valour and competitiveness. They see their occupation as one that encapsulates masculinity in its 'purest' form -- one that requires immense physical strength and stamina and one that women, for instance, cannot do. As Paine puts it: "Ultimately, it is their sense of being that is entwined in this enterprise." (2002:70-71). Thus, what is valued is skill, effort, efficiency, and the ability to take risks fearlessly: "To be a man was to be an aggressive, self-confident and independent fisherman who took orders from no-one" (Stirrat:1988:54).⁷⁵ By virtue of the fact of, relative, affluence the fishermen have not had to be dependent on patrons nor the state. They have been able to take an 'independent' line vis-à-vis the 'moral community'.⁷⁶

The fishermen recognise that they are in a risky occupation. At the same time they had developed approaches towards risk management which contained this risk and kept it within reasonable limits. The first of these was not to go out to sea on days when the weather was in any way unsuitable. The second was to perform those rituals such as the *poson perahera* and *bodhi poojas* which sought the protection of the gods.⁷⁷

While conspicuous consumption seems to have something to do with social position in Sinhapura, the latter does not seem to be determined by a strong economic base alone. If

⁷⁵ There is a certain similarity between the ideological context of Sinhapura and the folk model of the 'Skipper Effect', in Icelandic fisheries, described by Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (1993).

⁷⁶ These are views that were revealed to me in a succession of interviews with those from the landside as well as the seaside.

⁷⁷ The *poson perahera* is the temple ritual which celebrates the day of the full moon in June, regarded as the day on which Buddhism was introduced into Sri Lanka. *Bodhi poojas* are offerings of flowers at the temple in order to avert a disaster or gain some benefit.

this was the case the fishing community, obviously more affluent, would be the dominant group in the village. There is an on-going struggle for social supremacy, between the fishing families and those on the landside. The fishing community is unwilling to grant the landside a higher social position, by virtue of their education and/or their clerical and government employment. Such is the subterranean tension which pervades the social life of Sinhapura.⁷⁸

It will now be clear that there are two broad categories of people living in this village. There are the fishermen and their families living in the western sector of the village some of whom are the owners of mechanized *wallams* and multi-day boats. The other category of person pursues technical, teaching, or clerical occupations and lives, largely, on the eastern side of the village. There is also a smaller segment involved in trade whose businesses are located on the High Street, and who live either behind the store or in close proximity to it. For all these groups economic advancement, investment in education and, consequently, the improvement of lifestyle have been desirable aspirations. In recent years employment in countries such as Dubai and South Korea, where remuneration is much higher than in Sri Lanka, has been valued and obtained. There has been the temporary migration of an individual for the purpose of the economic advancement of the family. It is not the migration of the whole family, which was referred to earlier in this chapter. In this case, remittances have been used for a variety of purposes such as the construction of a house, expenditure on education, business investment and so on.

Amongst the fishing community the extended family is important and there appears to be a certain level of cognatic marriage. Residence is either virilocal or uxorilocal, depending on inheritance. What is critical, is the availability of land and the potential of building a house in a village where land is increasingly scarce. On the landside, the extended family is not particularly significant; it is the nuclear family and the neighbourhood connection which is important. There seems to be a difference in marriage patterns between the landside and the seaside. This appears to relate to the greater prevalence of joint family households on the seaside, which is associated with the scarcity of land. On the landside the goal of establishing a household based on a

⁷⁸ The cleavage between the landside and the seaside and the implications of it are discussed at greater length, with ethnographic examples, in Chapters 3 and 6.

nuclear family is pursued far more energetically, as land is more freely available. In the High Street, households are connected to each other by virtue of being descendents of the siblings of an earlier generation. This is to say, that many of these households have kin connections with each other. In the current generation the tendency appears to be to marry out of the village.

In Sinhapura women do not participate directly in the activity of fishing. It is taboo for them to be on the beach at the time that the fishermen go out to sea or return. It is a taboo which is universally regarded.⁷⁹ This can be contrasted with Ambakandawila, for instance, where women sell the fish (Stirrat, 1988), in addition to making many important decisions about the purchase of gear. The Sinhapura context can also be contrasted with Gulati's (1984) account of women's participation in the fishing industry, as prawn peelers and nylon net repairers. In Negombo (on the western coast, north of Colombo) and Kalmunai (on the eastern coast) women even go out to sea. In Sinhapura, women control the household income. As Ram (1990) states about the Mukkuvar economy, women are active in the 'informal' credit economy which is integral to the functioning of the community. The women play an important role in handling the various resources available to this community and making these resources 'work' for them. They are active in money-lending and in the organisation of 'seettus'.⁸⁰ They utilise the many microfinance programmes operating in the village. The women see their position in the private sphere as more empowering, in terms of respect and status, than an uncertain venture into the public domain. As Ram puts it: "I have argued that in the Mukkuvar community the domestic sphere is more empowering of women than is the kind of paid work available to most uneducated girls and women, a conclusion in direct contrast to what we have come to expect on the basis of modernisation theory." (1990: 227).

At the time that I was doing my fieldwork, and at the time of the tsunami, the internal conflict in Sri Lanka was on-going. I did not take it as a 'given' that the conflict shapes all social processes in the country. This is *precisely* the point that, in my opinion, merits

⁷⁹ Stirrat's (1988, 1989) account of Ambakandawila contains no description of such a taboo on women's presence on the beach.

⁸⁰ A *seettu* is a credit circle common in many parts of South Asia. Most often it has an organiser and others join at his/her invitation. They pledge to contribute a certain amount, each month, for the duration of the exercise. The sum, so collected, is taken by one of the members of the circle, each month, who acquires this right either through an auction or through the drawing of lots.

problematization. What I found interesting was the way in which the south was able, given the fact that Sri Lanka is a small country, to continue with everyday activities, largely, as if there was no military conflict taking place. The war was not a matter of daily discussion and its effects were rarely felt in Sinhapura. However, when there was an ‘episode’ such as the LTTE attack on Galle harbour which was reported by the media, it was certainly commented upon. I found the discussions tended to be more in the abstract and at the level of norms, rather than dealing with pragmatic realities. A comment by Arnold Bennett in his novel *The Old Wives’ Tale* illustrates this point: “...the big events that get into the history books, are, from the point of view of ordinary life, a background. Whatever is happening on the public scene, one’s own struggle goes on...” (1908: 12) It is only in a general sense that the war to the progress of the country, was felt to be a hindrance to these coastal communities, especially in terms of access to employment.

It is this lived experience, which I have described above, which was disrupted in a single day by the tsunami disaster. In the next section I shall describe the damage and destruction which took place in Sinhapura as well as the responses to this damage, by a variety of actors, and the implications of this.

Tsunami Damage and Responses -- Sinhapura

The first wave of the tsunami hit Sinhapura at 9.15 a.m. on 26 December 2004. The second, arrived five minutes later. The water remained for about half an hour before part of it receded back into the sea, and the other part drained into the river.

There were six deaths in Sinhapura due to the tsunami. The damage suffered by houses on the seaside was considerable. Household goods were washed away including gold, which is the form of saving amongst fishing households.

The High Street, though not structurally damaged, lost stock and equipment. Thus, there was a pronounced capital loss. A trader with several businesses affected by the tsunami, told me that he had lost Rs. 3 million because of this disaster. The coir industry was also seriously affected. The retting pits, which produce the raw material from which coir rope is manufactured, were washed away by the tsunami waves.⁸¹ The machinery in the

⁸¹ The retting pits, which is where coconut husks are ‘rotted’ in order to produce coir fibre, were washed away by the tsunami waves, such that there was a dearth of coir for rope-making.

Coir Factory was affected by the salt water. Therefore, the operation of the factory ceased until 2009, when it was refurbished. This, together with the destruction of almost the whole of the fishing fleet, resulted in a severe disruption of livelihoods. The infrastructure was affected to the extent that occupations could not be pursued, with a consequent effect on income. A variety of services were not available to the community, in the days that immediately followed the tsunami: the transport services were severely disrupted and there was some doubt whether the schools would re-open on the due date in January 2005. The scale of loss, in many instances, was such that the resources of the village were unequal to the task of reconstruction.

Water did not present a problem in Sinhapura. On the seaside the wells had been closed, before the tsunami, because of high salt content. The ones which were operational, were the ones on the landside. These wells were not affected by the tsunami waters and provided a source of water for the community, before the broken water pipes were repaired by the government authorities. There was no electricity as the electric poles were damaged. It is after six days that water and electricity were restored. As the grocery outlets on the High Street were closed, due to damage, food supplies had to be brought from inland communities. It was the temple which played a major role in feeding people during the initial days. The temple had a stock of food which was augmented by gifts of provisions from neighbouring temples, and also by donations from inland communities. This situation continued for about three weeks until the High Street began, slowly, to resurrect itself.

When we visited Sinhapura on 30 December 2004 we observed signs of trauma everywhere, particularly amongst those that had sought refuge in the temple.⁸² There was conflict over the access to relief items; alcohol was prominently consumed; and, coarse language was frequent. The mood in this 'liminal moment' was one of despair, certainly, but also of anger and resentment at God, at nature, at the government, and at relief organizations (Turner 1961, 1986). This relates to the sense in which the fishermen's sense of familiarity with the sea was disturbed. However, as far as the relationship with the sea was concerned, the disruption was of a short duration. The oral tales about a tsunami as a once in a 2000 year event, received much publicity and the

⁸² After the tsunami I did a Befrienders' course and am trained to recognise the signs of those suffering from trauma although, obviously, not to treat it.

disaster came to be cast in these terms. This contributed towards regaining confidence in the sea, as an entity which would not unleash its power for another 2000 years.

There were two consequences as far as the temple was concerned. The enmity between some sections of the community and the chief monk was dissipated, to a considerable extent, during the critical role played by the temple in the days immediately after the tsunami. At the same time, the enforced sojourn of some people in the temple considerably increased its regular congregation.

There was a role reversal, as far as gender was concerned, in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami. Women had to be resourceful in a context where men had abrogated their role as chief bread-winner. It was women who queued for government assistance and liaised with relief organisations. Thus, men had to deal with issues of self-esteem, identity and confidence. Women took the view that men could not ‘cope’ with misfortune, and that women were the stronger sex -- mentally, emotionally and spiritually. This situation can be contrasted with Hoffman’s account of the aftermath of the Oakland firestorm, in the USA, in 1991. She describes an ‘egalitarian’ context being transformed, after the disaster, into one of ‘traditional’ gender relations: “In the shock of loss, both men and women retreated into traditional cultural realms and personas. Men launched into command and took action.” (1999:177).

Sinhapura had a, relatively, high income which translated into a determined pursuit of social mobility. In these terms, the impact of the tsunami was devastating. The people of Sinhapura felt that their losses were greater than the smaller villages of the vicinity. This cultivated a perception which saw ‘handouts’, very much as a right. The fishing households felt that it was *they* who had been, principally, affected by the tsunami and that, therefore, *they* should be the recipients of aid. In their view, destruction of house or boat was the *only* genuine criterion for receiving aid. This perception was the basis of much controversy between the landside and the fishing households.

The entire fishing fleet of Sinhapura was damaged by the tsunami. Out of a total of 60 *wallams* 16 were totally destroyed while 38 sustained damage to hulls and to engines, in varying degrees.⁸³ In the case of the 15 canoes, 9 were no longer usable and 4 were slightly damaged. The harm to multi-day boats was minimal as many were out at sea.

⁸³ Approximately 50 mobile phones, a vital piece of equipment in modern fisheries, were washed away by the tsunami waves.

The catch became a mere fraction of what it had been. The diminution of the catch had repercussions for the relationships between the boat owners, the crew and the fish traders.

The boat owners as well as the small entrepreneurs, looked to organizations like the Trust; the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Sri Lanka (FCCISL); relief organisations; kin in the interior of the country; and, to the government to come to their aid. They also attempted to activate their political connections, with regional as well as national politicians. The donation of new boats, by relief agencies and foreign nationals, was the site of much contestation and debate about the 'sea-worthiness' of these boats, as well as whether the distribution was equitable.

A few months after the tsunami, by June and July 2005, the number of *wallams* in Sinhapura had increased to 72, while the number of canoes rose to 34. In terms of multi-day boats the increase was only one. The sources of this increase in the number of boats, were international relief agencies, local organizations, The Trust, individual foreign nationals, and the government⁸⁴. The implication of this has been that the balance of power has shifted away from boat owners and skippers, to crew members. Whereas, before the tsunami, there was an abundant supply of crew and fewer boats, the situation afterwards, in the context of an abundance of boats, has been one in which skippers find it difficult to recruit a suitable crew.

One of the greatest difficulties faced by the fishermen and the small entrepreneurs, in Sinhapura, was the repayment of loans, in a context in which income had abruptly ceased. There were several individuals who had a variety of debts -- a house building loan; a loan on the boat; a loan on a three wheeler -- and who found themselves in dire straits.⁸⁵ Some microfinance organisations, such as the Sanasa Development Bank, suspended the repayment of loans for a grace period of about three months, as did some commercial institutions such as leasing companies.⁸⁶ There were many disingenuous applications for compensation from the state as well as from the organisations involved in relief, in a context where many individuals were very concerned about their inability

⁸⁴ Many fishermen had not registered their boats with the local fisheries authority and, therefore, had trouble in asserting a claim for compensation. Registration, though not expensive, was regarded as 'unnecessary'.

⁸⁵ A 'three wheeler' is a form of vehicular transport common in South Asia.

⁸⁶ Rahman (1991) has described how the Grameen Bank microfinance system suspends repayments during periodic floods, consequent upon tropical cyclones, in Bangladesh.

to repay loans, and the implications of this.⁸⁷ For example, there were those who presented themselves as people who had had a boat when, in fact, they were crew members. Then there was the individual who claimed that his whole house had been rendered uninhabitable, when in fact only one wing was damaged. In this case, the claim was not successful since there were many to protest to the authorities that the application was a false one.

A loss of income was also sustained by those in the village who worked in the tourist industry. These were people who while having a house to live in and all the other trappings of a reasonable lifestyle, suddenly found themselves in parlous circumstances due to the loss of income.

What has been the response to this crisis, both within the village and beyond it? Though the rhetoric in terms of which these responses were framed, was about the retrieval of that which had been lost there was, in fact, much that was new in the situation which emerged. There were new resources from new sources reaching the community through new avenues. In the era prior to the tsunami, external assistance came from the state and from a few microfinance organisations. This was now expanded to new types of state assistance, to new NGO programmes and to financial help from individual donors.⁸⁸ The disbursement of these funds was on lines which were somewhat different to those to which the community was accustomed.

The main sources of aid, certainly in the initial period, were individual foreign nationals, primarily those holidaying in the region, and the Trust. Foreign nationals ‘walked about’ the region, disbursing large amounts of cash with, one presumes, the best of intentions. This had the effect, however, of a: “superabundance of what might be thought of as ‘disaster boom’ cash.” (Simpson:2007:933). It added to the atmosphere of confusion, and intensified feelings of envy amongst those who were not the fortunate recipients.

The role played by the Trust in ensuring a steady income from the sale of coir rope was important in the aftermath of the tsunami, because it kept households functional when there was no income from fishing. The Trust did this by getting stocks of coir from

⁸⁷ Simpson (2007) describes a similar scenario in Bhuj after the Gujarat earthquake.

⁸⁸ A full discussion of state assistance and the institutions through which this was channelled to the village is to be found in Chapter 4. A similar discussion with respect to non-governmental assistance is to be found in Chapter 5.

other parts of the country which were not affected by the tsunami. The Trust also arranged for the sale of the coir rope, produced by the tsunami-affected women, to Charles P. Hayley and Company, long time dealers in coir products with their main office in Galle.

Aid was a way in which donors of First World communities represented themselves to their own societies, and accumulated symbolic capital (Clark, 2005). The actions of organisations such as the Sri Lanka Wales Association and the Sri Lanka Minnesota Friendship Society, in the aftermath of the tsunami, provide good examples of a process by which ‘philanthropy’, to Sri Lankan tsunami victims, was the instrument for the acquisition of symbolic capital in the home communities (Lowe:2004).

It was some weeks after the tsunami that NGOs commenced various relief initiatives in the village. These included the disbursement of a variety of consumer items, such as packages of household goods and bicycles, and the construction of temporary shelter through an agreement with the government. These organisations were concerned with the immediate problem of the replacement of destroyed infrastructure and goods. Some of them, however, attempted initiatives with a more long term emphasis.

The government relief programme of cash and dry goods, once it was established, was seen by all, whether tsunami affected or not, as a legitimate entitlement and as an easy avenue of capital. The access to the resources of the state became a source of social advancement (Spencer, 1990). As Simpson puts it, writing about the aftermath of the Gujarat earthquake: “...as a result, access to the government’s coffers became highly competitive and a source of jealousy, rivalry and suspicion.” (2005: 238).⁸⁹

Furthermore, in local terms, relief disbursements became a disincentive to the resumption of former income earning activities.

Many fishing households felt that aid had not been ‘equitably’ distributed; that it had been arbitrarily decided or politically motivated, particularly by the local arm of the bureaucracy (Bavinck, 2008). They also felt that those with connections to relief agencies or to foreign nationals ‘brokered’ deals for their ‘clients’. In this context, there were allegations that some had turned the tsunami relief process into a ‘business’.

⁸⁹ This is an issue which came up repeatedly in the interviews that I conducted, and also in sessions with informant groups.

Assistance came to be framed in terms of rights, which were seen as being compromised.

While the relief programmes were designed to reach all those who suffered loss, the reality is that many fell through the crevices of these initiatives. There were those who should have received assistance from several sources but got it from nobody for reasons such as, the insufficiency of contacts; the inability to activate such contacts as they had; and the operation of rules and regulations to their disadvantage. It is through the creative access of resources, in terms of a variety of alliances, that most households attempted their recovery. Furthermore, state assistance, in most cases, particularly that which was provided to rebuild damaged housing, was not sufficient to make good the loss. It is also the case that there were those who received state aid even though they were not strictly entitled to it. Similarly, some received assistance from humanitarian organisations to which neither those notions of justice nor equity which prevailed in the community, entitled them.⁹⁰

The type of small enterprises which were a characteristic of Sinhapura's economy, were not eligible for loans from commercial banks. The banks looked for a strong credit history, as detailed above, some collateral and evidence of the ability to repay the loan. It is in this context that opportunities opened up for the myriad microfinance institutions which started operations in Sinhapura, and the region, in the immediate months after the tsunami.

The owner of a grocery store in Sinhapura told me that after the tsunami a prominent, private insurance company did not pay him his due compensation, although he had insured the grocery with them. According to the company, the insurance policy did not contain a cover for earthquake and, therefore, for tsunami. However, the owner was vociferous in his assertion that this same company had paid compensation to large supermarkets in Hikkaduwa, even though they had had the same cover. This, and similar instances, conveyed the impression that the insurance companies were somewhat capricious in their response to making good the losses resulting from the disaster.

⁹⁰ A fuller discussion of these aspects of reconstruction, with illustrative cases are provided in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

There has been some temporary, as well as permanent, migration from Sinhapura after the tsunami. There were those who were too scared to continue to live near the sea and who, therefore, went to friends and relatives inland. Then, there were others who managed to buy land in the interior in order to move, permanently. There has been the 'forced' migration of those who had their houses destroyed, within the 100m buffer zone -- almost entirely fishing households. These households, have been resettled on a newly built housing estate, inland, 7 kms from Sinhapura.

One aspect which was very clear in the post-tsunami context, is the fact that fishing communities, used to a lifestyle of 'independence', found their dependence on the state and other organisations problematic. Thus, there have been two big changes in the aftermath of the tsunami: migration of fishing households from these coastal communities to new tsunami resettlements inland; changes in the structure of the fisheries industry, particularly in terms of a widened base of the ownership of boats and equipment.

Comparison of Sinhapura with other coastal communities

The south-western coast, like most of Sri Lanka's coastline, is dotted with communities where fishing is a major activity. Once I had done a fair amount of data collection in Sinhapura and on the institutions of the region, I constructed a framework, based on the themes of my research in Sinhapura, which encompassed the main features of a disaster-affected community: size, composition, technology, damage, resources and response. It is in terms of this framework that my comparison of communities, affected by the tsunami, along this coastline was conducted. I travelled from Panadura, to the immediate south of Colombo, to Hambanthota, in the deep south of Sri Lanka, and spent a few days in specific communities. Therefore, the account of differences and commonalities which follows has a certain empirical basis.

These communities are differentiated in many respects: population; ethnic composition; caste; and religious affiliation. In some it is only a segment of the population which is involved fishing. They are also differentiated in the fisheries technologies that they use. At one end of the spectrum is the non-mechanised outrigger canoe, while at the other end is the much larger, far more expensive, multi-day boat. There are different types of fishing such as lagoon fishing, river fishing, and the use of a variety of nets. Nets of the traditional variety -- *madal* -- are still used in areas where the geomorphology of the

coastline is conducive to this form of fishing (Alexander, 1982). Moreover, there are different combinations of types of fishing and fisheries technologies.

Technology does, of course, determine where the fishing is done and, therefore, the nature of the catch. This, in turn, decides to whom the catch is sold and the financial arrangements which underpin the endeavour. These different profiles of fishing depend on the size of the fishing community, and the access to capital and to markets. The various policies implemented by the government, in relation to fishing communities, has meant that in the last forty years these communities have seen a rise in incomes. This has enabled fishermen to take on much more in the way of credit for the expansion of their boats and equipment. It is not, however, every one of these communities which enjoyed this prosperity and which was, therefore, able to service a high volume of credit. This was possible only in communities such as Sinhapura, where capital from other sectors of the village economy could be mobilised for investment in fisheries. Thus, government policy did not have the same effect on all communities. Inherent differences interacted with these measures, to produce a wide variety of fishing communities along this coastline.

Some of these communities have a High Street bazaar which caters to smaller inland communities and which has, therefore, increased the volume of its economic activities. One significant point of commonality is the fact that the education of the next generation is seen as a worthwhile aspiration, although the access to educational facilities tends to be variable.

Such regional characteristics mark the south-western coast off from other places such as the north-western coast described by Stirrat (1988). Here, there were clearly differences in the mode of sale of the catch and the role played by women. Furthermore, this region is dominated by a Catholic religious culture.

There was differentiated damage both to residences and to public buildings and to commercial establishments, along the coastline. In Peraliya, a village to the north of Sinhapura, the devastation of housing and other infrastructure was almost total. Much life was lost, such that the village did not re-emerge as a rehabilitated settlement after the tsunami. It was abandoned by those few inhabitants who were left amongst the ruins of the village. In a large community like Mirissa, a town considerably to the south of Sinhapura, where the fishing fleet was entirely composed of multi-day boats, damage to

equipment and to the harbour was very extensive. Reconstruction and rehabilitation has only been possible because of heavy external assistance. Sinhapura can be contrasted with Akurala, a much smaller community to its north, where the fishing technology was limited to small outrigger canoes and where the economy, consequently, was much smaller in scale. Besides this, Akurala's economy did not go beyond fishing; it did not have the diversity that was a characteristic of Sinhapura.

In Thotagamuwa, again to the north, there were neither buildings nor residences on the seaside of the Galle Road. On the landside the first line of defence was a series of shops which were largely destroyed. The houses were in fact behind the shops and were largely protected. In some villages where the fishing component was small and where the fisheries income was only a small proportion of total income, the disruption of the village economy was limited. In some places such as Koggala, to the south of Galle, the proximity of the Free Trade Zone provided the community with other sources of income, for instance from the garment industry, in the immediate post tsunami months.

The greatest damage, by far, in the south was suffered by Hambanthota both in the number of people who lost their lives -- about 15,000 -- and in the damage to the infrastructure of the town. It was a town which was controlled by the Muslim community, in the sense that local government institutions were dominated by Muslims and they played a significant role in the commercial sector. It had a mixed ethnic and caste composition. The tsunami hit Hambanthota on the day of its weekly fair so that at least half of those who died were from neighbouring communities, inland, who had come to the fair either to sell their goods or to make purchases. All this should make it clear that the damage suffered by coastal communities was in no way uniform.⁹¹

The only place along the southern and western coast in which a long term plan was implemented, as the framework for reconstruction, was in Hambanthota. Such a plan existed at the time of the tsunami. Successive governments of the past had supported the plan, but had not implemented it. The tsunami disaster became the opportunity for a new Hambanthota and its implementation has proceeded with some speed.⁹²

⁹¹ This is a point that I come back to in Chapter 6.

⁹² I say this on the basis of informant sessions with various senior professionals, some of whom have had close political connections with these successive governments.

The infiltration of microfinance organisations had an interesting impact on the communities of the south-western coast. Its greatest effect was in communities which had operated at a high level of credit, relative to income. This income was now shattered. Sources of credit had to be located which would help the community until its own avenues of income were re-established. It is this role that the microfinance agencies filled, in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami. The expansion of microfinance also had another impact. Credit, not merely on this coast, but also in other parts of the country, had a way of operating within established social networks, both drawing on them and, in turn, cementing those relationships. The expansion of the microfinance activity tended to create new networks and, thereby, to some extent at least, to disrupt existing ones. In Sinhapura this was markedly evident, though perhaps it was not so apparent in some of the smaller communities where the size of the economy was much smaller.

The response to post-tsunami circumstances was also differentiated. Those of a relatively high social position, in some communities, felt that it was beneath their dignity, despite the sudden change in fortune, to be dependent on the state and other organisations for assistance. For others this was not a concern so much as the potential largesse which was available for exploitation. Another theme was the view that the affluent had various resources which they would be able to mobilise and, therefore, that public assistance should be directed towards the poor. It is ideas about entitlement and recrimination which were the order of the day.

Migration to new destinations became a feature of many communities. In some of the new settlements the inevitable mix of different castes, ethnicities and religions, and of people from different places, did not make for harmony, in the initial weeks. This was not so, however, in the Hambanthota resettlement, inland. As one informant told me: *“Hama daama ape samaajaya misra samaajayak. Ema nisaa aluthen athi vuna gamvala misra svruupaya apata nupurudu deyak novai. Anith palaath vala athi vela thiyana gatum valata apata muna denna sidu vune naha”* (We have always been a community of mixed caste, ethnicity and religion. Therefore, the plan of the new communities in which this mix was clearly a feature was in no way strange to us. As a result we have not experienced, in these new communities, many of the conflicts which are said to have

been a feature of new communities elsewhere).⁹³ In some areas where large resettlement communities were constructed on land reclaimed from the jungle, some attacks by wild animals, particularly elephants, did take place. The volume of housing that was initiated by both government and other agencies varied in terms of the size of the community, the nature of the damage that it suffered and the extent to which its physical rehabilitation was seen as a priority. There was, however, much criticism of how this was done. Those who provided the money did not provide adequate supervision and the final result was housing, in many cases, which was below the acceptable standards. It must be clear that it is where the volume of building was high, that the opportunity for substandard construction was large.

With this chapter I conclude what may be described as the background to this study. I have discussed those issues which provide me with my orientation. I have set out the circumstances which led me to Sinhapura. I have described the general features of the tsunami in its impact on Sri Lanka. I have also given such information about my primary focus, which is Sinhapura, which will enable the reader to set in context much that appears in the chapters to come. Finally, I have compared Sinhapura in terms of various critical features with the other communities of this coast. In the next chapter I set out my research problem; explain the theoretical approach in terms of which I approach this problem; and describe the methodological strategy that I deployed in order to gather my data.

⁹³ Personal communication with a tsunami affected informant in Hambanthota.

Chapter 2 -- Theory and Methodology

The Research Problem

In this chapter, I set out the research problem that I am concerned with, and the theoretical framework that I have developed for this purpose. I then set out the data that I collected; the sources from which these data were obtained; and the methods which were used for this purpose.

My research problem may be stated as follows: How have communities on the south-western coast of Sri Lanka, particularly in Sinhapura, reproduced themselves in the aftermath of the disruption created by the tsunami disaster, and what does this tell us about the social processes of this community?

In my conceptualisation, social process is the deployment of resources to realise aspirations, while strategising and behaviour are the practices through which this is done.⁹⁴ A disaster has an impact on resources. In addition to destroying physical assets, income and a variety of networks and alliances, a disaster disrupts the worldview of a community, which involves the imagining of the future in terms of a set of aspirations. With the inflow of resources, through various institutional interventions, to replace those that have been destroyed, what happens to aspirations? Do these aspirations, in turn, shape the pursuit of resources? How best can this interaction be identified, described and analysed? Thus, I am interested in the dialectic between resources and aspirations, i.e., the social processes of Sinhapura, and how this was affected by the tsunami.

To elaborate this further, I am concerned with the factors which determined the responses to loss, as a social and culturally mediated experience. In what sense were these responses, by individuals and households, conditioned by their circumstances, attributes, capacities, social position and aspirations? How critical was the ability to mobilise alliances in this endeavour? What generalisations, if any, can be made about the nature of the reconstruction process? My problem, then, in the broadest terms, is to explain what happens to social process in the aftermath of a disaster -- the social adaptations to loss and recovery.

⁹⁴ These concepts are discussed in detail in the next section.

The Theoretical Conceptualisation

In terms of the research problem stated above, the central concepts which I choose as important to my scheme of analysis should be able to make sense of how people respond to the destruction of resources through a catastrophe; their augmentation through the intervention of agencies both state and otherwise; their exploitation by different households and individuals; the aspirations in terms of which this is done; and, the connections and relationships which are deployed for this purpose.

In developing a set of concepts useful for the analysis of the problem which I have set out, I found the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu of considerable use.

In any community there are resources, be they social, material, notional or ideological, which are valued.⁹⁵ Individuals ‘work’ to create the opportunities for the possession of these resources. Bourdieu refers to these resources as capital which is accumulated because it has value (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Jenkins 2002). The possession of capital confers power, reputation, authority and status which, dialectically, has implications for the process of accumulation. Bourdieu states that varied forms of capital -- economic, cultural, linguistic, symbolic and social -- are similar means and ends in the strategies that carry forward the pursuit of distinction within a social field. Thus, the possession of capital is the basis of capacity.

The social field is the context within which the accumulation of capital occurs. Bourdieu’s notion of a social field is an arena of competitive struggles, involving a range of capitals used in order to acquire power, authority and reputation. Thus, a field is a system of social positions structured internally in terms of power relations: “Positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence (homology) to each other by virtue of the access they afford to the goods or resources (capital) which are at stake in the field.” (Jenkins:2002:85, citing Bourdieu). An individual’s position in a social field constrains or enhances the capacity for accumulation. A field is also defined by what is at stake: “.the existence of a field

⁹⁵ I do not use the term ‘value’ in the sense of a codified body of rules which orient social behaviour. I use it in the sense of the worth placed on an entity in a cultural context. This could be physical resources such as arable land, forests, mineral wealth, aquatic resources. It could be opportunities for trade, the sale of products of small-scale manufacture, services, labour. It could also be intangibles such as honour, status, fame, prestige, leadership, power, authority.

presupposes and, in its functioning, creates a belief on the part of participants in the legitimacy and value of the capital which is at stake in the field.” (Jenkins:2002:85).

Related to capital is another important concept in Bourdieu’s scheme. This is practice. His goal, as he says at one point, is to develop a theory of social practice (Jenkins quoting Bourdieu, 2002). Indeed, it is in terms of practice that capital achieves its significance in the analytical scheme. The concept of habitus, in Bourdieu’s work, is the attempt to knit agency and structure together: “It is in bodily hexis that the idiosyncratic (the personal) combines with the systematic (the social). It is the mediating link between individuals’ subjective worlds and the cultural world into which they are born and which they share with others.” (Jenkins:2002:75, citing Bourdieu). It is through socialisation that habitus is created, and it is the genesis of practice. Bourdieu places the emphasis not on rule-governed behaviour but on the strategizing and the improvisatory nature of practice. For Bourdieu, practice is not *wholly* consciously organized, neither is it the aggregate of individual behaviour. In this conceptualisation, he sees practice as constrained by the opportunities and limits of the social field within which action occurs. It will be seen, therefore, that practice is an essential concept in the understanding of the accumulation of capital.

Giddens’ (1979) use of the concept of ontological security (drawing upon R.D. Laing), with its basis in mutual knowledge echoes, to a certain extent, Bourdieu’s notion of the socialising nature of practice: “In most circumstances of social life, the sense of ontological security is routinely grounded in mutual knowledge employed such that interaction is ‘unproblematic’, or can be largely ‘taken for granted’.”

(Giddens:1979:219). Both Bourdieu and Giddens focus, at this point, on the routinised, habitual nature of behaviour. They diverge, to the extent that for Bourdieu, behaviour has a stronger improvisatory and strategic nature whereas for Giddens, it is the normative orientation which is more important: “...ontological security can be taken to depend upon the implicit faith actors have in the conventions (codes of signification and forms of normative regulation) via which, in the duality of structure, the reproduction of social life is effected.” (Giddens:1979:219).

Giddens’ (1979) notion of ‘discursive consciousness’ where he touches on the ‘unknowing’ dimension of action which, he argues, is the product of knowledge which exists at the level of the unconscious finds some resonance with Bourdieu’s notion of

practice. The agent is not, necessarily, a 'knowing' actor who confidently negotiates the minefield of social life but, often, is one who manoeuvres in a context in which much is unknown. As Jenkins puts it, there is a constant tension, in Bourdieu's work, between the conscious action of individual actors and socially constituted practice.

A related but distinct contribution to these issues comes from Norman Long (2001, 2006), who gives emphasis to the linkages and networks that develop with the individual at the centre. 'Interface' is the term that he uses for this interaction. Long attaches considerable importance to the scope that is permitted individuals in the conduct of their linkages and networks, and the consequences of their actions, given this scope. Long's actor-oriented approach is about differing actor strategies, the conditions under which they arise, how they interlock, and their variability or effectiveness for solving specific problems.

To re-capitulate: in Bourdieu's terms, the social field is the context within which the accumulation of capital takes place. Participation in the social field and the competition that this implies, creates legitimacy and value for capital. Practice is the mechanism by which the accumulation of capital is realised. Bourdieu's notion of strategising is relevant in the sense that this permits an exploration of how norms are used, or not, to legitimise certain processes of accumulation. His notions about the accumulation of capital, the position in a social field, and the strategic nature of practice are useful for the analysis of the manner in which the tsunami disaster affected the capacities of recovery of diverse actors. These ideas enable a critical perspective of the new social spaces, created by the changing interactions between individuals, within networks.

Apart from the usefulness of Bourdieu I also found Appadurai's ideas about aspiration and capacity relevant to my purpose.

Appadurai starts from the position that while culture is about identity, property, heritage, monuments, customs, norms, values, beliefs and tradition it also has a capacity to generate and support various platforms of action, some of which may contradict one another: "..... cultural coherence is not a matter of individual items but of their relationships and the related insight that these relations are systematic and generative." (Appadurai:2004:61). Thus, he is interested in one specific dimension of culture; its orientation to the future. In these terms, he is concerned with aspiration as a cultural capacity. The way in which collective horizons constitute the basis for collective

aspirations is cultural. For Appadurai, aspirations are determined by a cultural context, although the choices may be individual: “Aspirations are never simply individualthey are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life.”

(Appadurai:2004:67). Aspirations are, therefore, socially and culturally defined.

According to Appadurai aspirations are the norms, values and beliefs central to a culture and conceived as specific and multiple designs for social life. Aspirations have to do with income, civic life, role in a group, religious affairs, political involvement and marriage. They are intimately bound up with the enduring idea that a community has of itself as developing, progressing, advancing:

“.... in every case, aspirations to the good life are part of some sort of system of ideas which locates them in a larger map of local ideas and beliefs about life: life and death, the nature of worldly possessions, the significance of material assets over social relations, the relative illusion of social permanence for a society, the value of peace or warfare.....more narrow still, these intermediate norms often stay beneath the surface and emerge only as specific wants and choices: for this piece of land or that, for that marriage connection or another one, for this job in the bureaucracy as opposed to that job overseas, for this pair of shoes over that pair of trousers. This last, more immediate, visible inventory of wants has often led students of consumption and of poverty to lose sight of the intermediate and higher order normative contexts within which these wants are gestated and brought into view. And thus decontextualized, they are usually downloaded to the individual and offloaded to the science of calculation and the market – economics.” (Appadurai:2004:68).

Appadurai's immediate concern is the nexus between culture, norms, capacity, aspiration and the future, in the context of a poverty alleviation and development paradigm. The poor lack the resources with which to express their views and get results skewed to their own welfare, in the political debates that surround wealth and welfare in societies. Their capacity to aspire to the 'good life' is weak. The rich are more able to produce justifications, narratives, metaphors and pathways through which bundles of goods and services are tied to wider social contexts and abstract norms and beliefs.

Thus, capacity is not evenly distributed through the social world:

“The capacity to aspire is thus a navigational capacity. The more privileged in any society simply have used the map of its norms to explore the future more frequently and more realistically, and to share this knowledge with one another more routinely than their poorer and weaker neighbours. The poorer members, precisely because of their lack of opportunities to practice the use of this navigational capacity (in turn because their situations permit fewer experiments and less easy archiving of alternative futures) have a more brittle horizon of aspirations.” (Appadurai:2004:69).

Appadurai argues that the poor have to be helped to develop those forms of cultural consensus, which is produced through verbal and material rituals, performances and metaphors, which may best advance their own collective long-term interest in matters of wealth, equality and dignity. It is by strengthening the cultural capacity of the poor, to aspire to newer and better things, that their situation can be changed. Thus, Appadurai is concerned with the way in which this process can be instrumental in the reduction of poverty in the particular context of Mumbai's urban poor.

For Appadurai what is significant is that this particular capacity of culture provides the framework within which the poor, in particular, can plan their advancement. My emphasis, however, is different. What I find useful in Appadurai's ideas is the generative nature of culture and the notion that aspiration is a product of a certain cultural context. Thus, I shall use Appadurai's ideas about aspiration and capacity to examine both the pre and post-tsunami contexts of Sinhapura, not only in terms of the poor but as far as the whole community is concerned. Appadurai does not address the differentials within the categories of rich and poor: it is the broad rich/poor dichotomy that engages him. My focus is, thus, different from that of Appadurai. I adapt Appadurai's ideas to analyse the differential ways in which people pursued strategies of recovery after the tsunami, irrespective of whether they were rich or poor.

When Appadurai states that the rich have "used the map of its norms to explore the future more frequently and more realistically" (Appadurai:2004:69) he is, on the one hand, emphasising the normative element and, on the other, pointing to a form of strategising in terms of aspiration which approximates, to a certain extent, to Bourdieu's thinking. He does not, of course, expound a comprehensive framework within which this activity is thought to take place. In the case of the urban poor in Mumbai, what he presents is an example of the way that the poor have been creative in navigating their circumstances. It is not an abstraction of this phenomenon into a theoretical framework, unlike Bourdieu. As explicated above, Appadurai's ideas about aspiration are a useful addition to Bourdieu's ideas about what the individual does in his practice, within the social field, to get a better share of capital. Appadurai makes experience and practice key to aspiration, as a navigational capacity.

Foucault's ideas about discourse are useful in the conceptualisation of relief interventions and media representation, in a disaster context, as a series of discursive

practices (Ferguson, 1990; Foucault, 1981; Escobar 1995; Grillo 1997; Pottier 1997; Preston 1994; Hobart, 1993).

Foucault has argued that institutions generate discourses which simultaneously construct a particular social dynamic, as a particular kind of object of knowledge, and create a structure of knowledge around that object. Discourse consists of groups of statements, and actions in relation to statements, identified as belonging to a single discursive formation whose unity is established by virtue of: “.....reference to a common *object* of analysis, presence of a.....*mode of statement*, deployment of a ‘system of permanent and coherent concepts’,persistence of theoretical theme.” (Foucault:1981:39). Aphorpe and Gasper (1996) assert that through narrative, framing and the use of other linguistic devices ‘discourse’ becomes an actor/an agent -- not a neutral participator, but a politically active one. Thus, in Foucauldian terms, the agent is not an individual actor but a focus, which gives coherence to an oeuvre.

Foucault contends that discursive practices are characterised by a delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, the effect of which is to make it virtually impossible to think outside this perspective as to do so is to appear beyond comprehension, beyond reason. This highlights how, through the possession of, and entitlement to, knowledge, the power and the legitimacy to make representations of ‘the truth’, come to be concentrated in the hands of a few individuals and groups. I see this construction of a ‘legitimate’ discourse, by external actors, as having shaped the reconfiguration of tsunami-affected communities.

These ideas enable a critical perspective on how different forces, particularly within the world of relief intervention, coalesced to create an ‘oeuvre’, which then became the framework of relief and reconstruction (Ferguson, 1990; Gane 1986; Nola 1998; Rabinow, 1984; Sheridan 1980; Sherzer 1987; Smart 1985; Rossi, 2004; Senaratne, 2000). As Rossi puts it: “While no discourse is intrinsically ‘truer’ or ‘falsier’ than the others, some discourses develop into a discursive configuration, and others exist in a state of marginality.” (2004:6).

I now present the theoretical framework within which I shall address the research problem spelt out at the beginning of this chapter, drawing largely upon the ideas of Bourdieu and Appadurai. This is not intended to be an abstract model based on their

concepts. It is, rather, a framework which is a tool of analysis, which helps me to examine the ethnographic data which are presented in Chapters 3,4,5 and 6.

Capital is pursued because it is valued, and because it enables individuals to realise those aspirations which are the goal of social endeavour. Capital relates to resources of many kinds: material; support in conflicts; reciprocities of various sorts; membership of groups; political alliances. It is in terms of the strategising of practice that capital accumulation takes place. This involves the competition for capital which is pursued with varying degrees of intensity. The possession of capital, i.e., capacity, designates the position occupied in the arena that is termed the social field -- social position. Strategising to accumulate capital, depends on the nature of this capacity. In this context alliances, within networks of relationships which can be deployed in the accumulation of capital, are important. Thus, the volume and the nature of capital that can be accumulated is dependent, on the one hand, on capacity, and on the other, on alliance. Some networks of relationships have a greater capacity to accumulate capital than others. Therefore, capacity is differential, i.e., it depends on the individual's position in a social field and on the nature of the networks of relationships. Individual actors are positioned in several fields, simultaneously. The accumulation of capital in one field has implications for the accumulation of capital in another field. The accumulation of capital and the change in capacity that this implies, can affect the position in the social field.

Thus, the resources, capital in Bourdieu's terms, that individuals and households have, at a particular moment in time, is their capacity. It is in terms of this capacity that they acquire their social position. From this position they aspire to the acquisition of more capital. It is based on capacity that they identify the aspirations that they are able to pursue and engage in strategising behaviour, deploying those alliances which are available to them through their networks. Equally, when a particular aspiration seems desirable individuals and households identify the resources necessary, and strategise to acquire these resources in order to realise the aspiration. It is this sequence of events which I refer to as social process, and which is a central concept in terms of which I analyse the impact of the tsunami on Sinhapura, in the following chapters.

It may seem that by focusing on social process and, therefore, on resources and aspirations I am narrowing my area of social enquiry. In fact, much else is encompassed

by these two elements: individuals and households strategise to realise their aspirations using the resources at their disposal. Such strategizing has several implications. It has to be done through the avenues that society offers, that is, through its institutions and through the normative system which operates on those institutions. It will be seen, therefore, that the analysis of a situation through the concept of social process is, in fact, a comprehensive social analysis.

What I have presented here, is the way in which I have drawn on Bourdieu and Appadurai so as to develop a framework which permits me to analyse, meaningfully, the issues presented by the impact of the tsunami on Sinhapura. This framework is necessarily eclectic; I have not taken the totality of Bourdieu's concepts, nor have I used them entirely in his style. Still less have I done so with Appadurai. The attempt has been to use Bourdieu and Appadurai in developing a conceptual approach that is appropriate to the research problem described above. These then are the key theoretical ideas which will be used in the analytical description of the pre and post-tsunami processes that the next chapters will address.

Methodology

In this section I describe the data which I collected; their relation to the problem which is the concern of this study; the sources from which the data were obtained; and, the methods which were deployed to do so. I read, and understood, the SOAS 'Statement on Ethics' and abided by it, in the conduct of my research.⁹⁶

In terms of Bourdieu's (2003) ideas about 'participant objectivation' the approach to fieldwork is a product of one's worldview. It is on the basis of a 'social past' that the anthropologist selects the problem that he/she wishes to research, the method by which this is to be done and assigns importance to the type of fact that is important for his/her problem. In these terms, Bourdieu states that an ethnography must have some sense of the social world which created the anthropologist and his/her interest in the research at hand -- the 'historical unconscious'. He goes on to comment that this not only involves the personal circumstances of the anthropologist but also his/her position within the microcosm of anthropology:

⁹⁶ Source: SOAS 'Statement on Ethics', www.soas.ac.uk ; 'Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice' of the Association of Social Anthropologists, www.theasa.org.uk; the guidelines of the American Anthropologists Association (AAA), www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm Accessed 2 February 2007.

“It is indeed scientifically attested that her most decisive scientific choices (of topic, method, theory, etc.) depend very closely on the location she (or he) occupies within her professional universe, what I call the ‘anthropological field’, with its national traditions and peculiarities, its habits of thought, its mandatory problematic, its shared beliefs and commonplaces, its rituals, values, and consecrations, its constraints in matters of publication of finds, its specific censorships, and, by the same token, the biases embedded in the organizational structure of the discipline, that is, in the collective history of the specialism, and all the unconscious presuppositions built into the (national) categories of scholarly understanding.” (Bourdieu:2003:283)

Emerson et al (2001) encapsulate both the personal, cultural and ideological past of the ethnographer, referred to by Bourdieu, as well as the way in which theoretical and institutional concerns shape research, excellently, in his concept of ‘stance’:

“*Stance*: Regardless of the conventions used to depict social life and to transcribe talk, the writer more deeply filters observed events through a particular *stance*, that is, an underlying orientation towards the people he studies and their ways of living. Stance not only shapes how the ethnographer observes and participates in the field, thus shaping the content of field notes; but stance also prefigures how the ethnographer orients to his ‘writing subject’ in composing field notes (Emerson et al., 1995:42-46). Stance is reflected in such matters as how the ethnographer identifies with (or distances himself from) those studied: for example, in writing about them sympathetically (or not); in selecting certain kinds of local activities, which draw his attention, to write about in more detailed descriptions; and in prioritizing and framing certain topics and thus writing more fully about those events he sees as relevant. Shaped by disciplinary training, theoretical interests, and moral and political commitments, an ethnographer’s stance may be evident in the content, comprehensiveness and shadings of descriptions. Certainly, the tone of descriptions, as expressed through word choice, definitely reflects the writer’s stance.” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw:2001:360).

A debate which is relevant, as far as this discussion is concerned, is that of the positioning of insider and outsider. Aguilar (1981) states that all ethnographers face the problem that their subjects have pre-conceptions and expectations of them, and that they carry the ‘baggage’ of ‘ethnocentrism’ (outsider), on the one hand, and ‘cultural chauvinism’ (insider), on the other. When I started my fieldwork in Sinhapura I knew the community, both because of my work after the tsunami and because of its long association with my family. In this sense, for someone such as myself working in my own country, the issue was the ‘deconstruction’ of certain cultural codes and meanings which are taken as a ‘given’. I did my best to overcome the problematic issue of familiarity through self-reflexivity (Okely, 1992; Caplan, 1988). As Halstead puts it: “... the ethnographer must constantly test and refine her own perceptions, in a reflexive

approach that allows both for her own specific voice, but also centrally for that of her 'hosts' in telling the story" (2001:320). The point, however, is that whether one is studying one's own culture or another, it is necessary to cultivate reflexivity and self-awareness -- an awareness of oneself as an entity with a worldview, which can 'colour' one's interpretation of ethnographic phenomena. In this context, Holy's (1984) statement that the significant point is not the extent to which the anthropologist is a 'member' of the community, but the competence of introspection and the ability to reflect on experience, is relevant. As far as I was concerned, I was quite well placed in Sinhapura because while I was not from the community (local) and, therefore, was able to cultivate a certain distance, I was from the wider cultural context of Sri Lanka and I could comprehend certain nuances of the social idiom. Therefore, the compartmentalization of the categories of 'insider' and 'outsider' is not helpful when more often than not, these boundaries tend to blur: "...my participant informants positioned me as insider and outsider, demonstrating how the rigidity of these boundaries can collapse." (Halstead:2001:307).

When I started my fieldwork in September 2007 I was known as a member of a family which had, since 1976, had a relationship with Sinhapura, which was shot through with patronage.⁹⁷ In this sense, there were certain cultural expectations which the community had of me, in terms of social position, age, gender and education. A facet of my situation was the fact that I was doing my research in a context where I had been involved in a relief project, as the coordinator of the Trust. As Mosse puts it: "It is.....an ethnography in which I am myself... [an] informant." (Mosse:2005:ix).

Given this context the following questions become relevant. What were the implications for my research, of my position as the coordinator of the Trust? How did this position of 'power' feed into my data collection? Did my role of fund disbursement prove an obstacle to understanding the dynamic of this community?

I found, in the course of my fieldwork, that there were various points at which I was at the receiving end of the suppression of information, and the evasion and deflection of questions. This was particularly the case during informant group sessions and in-depth interviews. In many instances it had to do with aid which had been disbursed by the

⁹⁷ To reiterate, from 2006 to 2013 my family continued the work of the Trust, although with less intensity than before.

Trust to the community. People did not want these grants investigated in case some discrepancies in their household circumstances were revealed, between the situation as represented to the Trust in 2005 and the reality in 2007/2008, some years after the tsunami. This pattern of reaction on the part of my respondents was evident also in the case of my research assistant and the local coordinator. They were both reluctant to tell me about any event in the community, such as a fracas on the High Street, which did not reflect positively on Sinhapura.

My position of 'power' was an obstacle to the information gathering as far as some people were concerned, and as far as some events and episodes were concerned. On the positive side is the fact that this same position of 'power' provided me with contacts which I might not have otherwise had. The connections formed in 2005 through the act of disbursement of tsunami aid became useful, in that I was known and had access to the community, in 2007/2008 when I was doing my fieldwork. Furthermore, what I tried to do was to incorporate the obstacles that I encountered into the research process, and turn it into an objective of inquiry.

It will be clear, in terms of the discussion above and in terms of the discussion in the 'Origin' section of the Introduction to this thesis, that this research was a product of the many particularities of my position. There is the fact that I am a 'native' anthropologist for whom the anthropological concerns are not the 'exotic' or the 'other', but those of the small developing country which I call home. Then, there is the fact that I was concerned about the 'representation' of the tsunami in some of the literature, as well as the media. It is all these concerns which have informed my approach to the research, the selection of the problem, as well as my approach to the data which I considered pertinent to the resolution of the problem at hand.

When I started my fieldwork in September 2007 the main issue that I wanted to explore was: what happened to the social processes in Sinhapura, consequent upon the tsunami. It was essential, then, to ascertain the pre-tsunami relations of the community, in order to understand the social processes of loss and recovery. An understanding was required of individuals and households, and the strategies that they pursued to realise their aspirations in post-tsunami circumstances. Data collection along these lines was based on the themes outlined below: the attributes of households in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, land-holding, income and expenditure; the control of resources

including those intangibles such as status and power; aspirations; the institutions and associations of the community; conflicts; the external forces bearing upon this community including the state, development organisations and microfinance institutions.

In terms of post-tsunami responses at the level of individuals and households, I was concerned with the following issues: differential strategies in terms of differential capacities, in the effort of recovery; the sources of assistance within the village such as kin, friends, neighbours, patrons, money-lenders; the significance of alliance and patronage, in the attempt to resuscitate livelihoods and reconstruct damage to house and property; the access to external resources and the barriers to this process; the control and appropriation of the opportunities which became available to the community after the disaster.

Beyond this, I was interested in the state programmes of relief: the delays in the disbursement of initial relief; the impediments to the construction of housing and to the resettlement of those affected by the tsunami; and the low priority placed by the state on the resuscitation of livelihoods.

As far as relief organisations were concerned I examined several issues: the decisions made about relief programmes at the level of policy, implementation and staff composition; the imperatives for uniform policies targeting tsunami-affected communities; the intense competition, between these agencies, to spend large volumes of resources; the ‘successes’ and ‘failures’ in this context; the responses of the communities to these interventions.

My intention in the comparative exercise was to examine the commonalities and differences, in terms of capacities to recover, in the different socio-economic contexts of the south-western coast.

Thus, my fieldwork had several distinct aspects to it: there were the data from Sinhapura; the data from communities along the coast, both to the north and south of Sinhapura; and the data from state and other organisations located in Colombo, Hikkaduwa and Galle.

In the course of my work as coordinator for the Trust, I had come to certain conclusions, about Sinhapura, on the basis of observation and experience. These conclusions were the foundation upon which I explored the trends and issues, with a ‘fresh’ perspective, when I started my fieldwork in Sinhapura in September 2007. I was not in the position of many anthropologists who go into unknown territory where anthropologist and subjects do not know each others’ ‘cognitive maps’, and have to ‘negotiate meaning’ (Holy, 1984). I was able to build upon the knowledge that I already had of the community (Bryman, 2001). At the same time I had to recognise very quickly, that some of the ‘conclusions’ which I had earlier come to during my work as the coordinator were, in fact, little more than biases which had to be re-examined through systematic investigation.

The complexity of the phenomenon which I was investigating in Sinhapura, necessitated a varied methodological strategy (Nastasi, Hitchcock, Sarkar, Burkholder, Varjas & Jayasena, 2007). In collecting my data I followed the usual practices of establishing the reliability of information, through communication with a multiplicity of respondents. In this process some things were directly observed and became part of my own experience. Others derived from what people communicated to me. Verification of this type of data is mainly by corroboration. One method of corroboration is through a series of single informants. Another is by way of an informant group session. A third is through the cross-questioning of an interviewee. A fourth is by way of a case-study. Together, all of these methods constitute a cumulative process of corroboration. Within the broad context of participant observation, I pursued a qualitative research strategy, which incorporated informant group sessions, in-depth interviews, case-studies, life histories, genealogies and the study of documents, in a specific order.⁹⁸ I now indicate the method by which I collected the data from each of the various sources.

My fieldwork in Sinhapura had two distinct phases. During the first phase, the approach to data collection was extensive and wide-ranging. During the second phase, it was

⁹⁸ The documents in Sinhapura were: deeds to land; records of private correspondence if accessible and ethically unproblematic; reports of investigations done in the district; temple records; correspondence relating to the tsunami between the citizens of Sinhapura and the state.

focused and specific. Each had its own collection of methods. I now describe these two phases in some detail.⁹⁹

I began the first phase of my fieldwork with an update of the household survey conducted by the Trust, in February 2005. In addition to information about households and individuals, this survey gave me the opportunity to get to know those members of the community who were not as familiar to me as some of the others. In the course of this, in discussion with my research assistant, I was able to pick out those people who I thought might serve as good informants.¹⁰⁰ These were people who both had knowledge about one or more areas of community activity and who, in addition, had the time and the inclination to talk to me.

When this was over, my effort was concentrated on the collection of data through the use of informants in a structured, progressive fashion. I shall come back to this presently. Parallel with this, I used other methods which, by their nature, were more appropriate to this preliminary phase.

At the same time that I was conducting informant group sessions, I took life histories of many different sorts of people. The purpose of this was to identify the types of personalities in the community, as well as its crisis points. As Pahl and Thompson put it: "It is a characteristic strength of life-story interviews in any society that they can open a window to the workings of the private sphere of life, as in these instances of the subtle complexities of changing family patterns of everyday life and relationships" (1994:151). I used the life history to get a historical sense of this community. It is through one of these sessions that a significant event in the past, the conflict with Kotigama in 1974 over an episode of boat burning, came to my attention. I then incorporated the investigation of this episode into one of my informant group sessions. In the case of another life history I was taken aback when the person that I was speaking to informed me, in the most matter of fact tones, that he had attacked his father with a small sword and that there was a murder case against him. This is a fact about this

⁹⁹ I have been initiated into this methodological strategy by my father, Dr. S.P.F. Senaratne. It is a scheme of fieldwork developed, initially, during his PhD fieldwork in Sri Lanka in the 1960s and refined further in the course of many research projects in Sri Lanka and in the other countries of South Asia. They are described in a forthcoming publication on Strategy Analysis.

¹⁰⁰ My research assistant, Enoka, had been involved in the survey in 2005. Therefore, she was someone that I knew well when I went back to do my fieldwork in 2007. Her role was to accompany me wherever I went in the village, and also to act as a primary informant on issues as they emerged from my research.

individual -- someone whose *wallam* we had helped to repair -- that none of my informants had thought necessary to share with me. I used this method to gain an insight into the 'little narratives' of this community (Faubion, 1993). While one of the potential limitations of life histories is the issue of standardized narratives, it was my experience that at the early stage of the study in which they were conducted, they did produce many insights on issues which were explored later.

I used genealogies to gain an insight into the way in which the people of Sinhapura were connected to each other, as well as to neighbouring communities, by bonds of kinship. This provided me with an 'entry' into issues such as marriage, land-holding, patron-client relations and political clusters. I had some sense of the kinship picture of this village through my research with the Trust. I knew, for instance, that the bonds of kinship were stronger between the households on the seaside than on the landside, where marriage tended to be such that spouses were, largely, from other villages. Altogether, the genealogies gave me a picture of the different neighbourhoods of the community and their interconnections.

I also examined the documents available in the village relating to its history. The perusal of documents, especially those contained in the temple in Sinhapura, recounting its history, enabled the contextualization of the ethnographic present, in a longitudinal perspective. There were documents written in Sanskrit, Pali, English and Sinhala.

I spent some time both on observing critical events, as well as in identifying those events which had to be observed when they would occur at a later date. Important among these were several activities connected with fishing, as well as the rituals connected to the temple.

I return now to the use of informants. I had several one-to-one sessions with each of my key informants. I did my best to ensure that my key informants represented a cross-section of this community in terms of gender, age, occupation, income, neighbourhood and political affiliation. After the sessions with these informants I organised several informant group sessions. The issues which had been discussed, explored and refined in one session, became the basis and the agenda for the next one. Thus, these sessions had a progressive character. In this way the information that was emerging was subjected, through the interaction of successive informant group sessions, to checks on its validity (Pottier and Orone, 1995; Mosse, 1994; Gujit and Cornwall, 1995; Richards, 1995; and

Pottier, 1993,1997). I also discovered that with the progression and the deepening of issues, new dimensions on particular issues emerged. This systematic method enabled analysis and reflection by myself, the ethnographer, at each level. It was the forum of the informant group session that I used to publicise the nature and the scope of my research.

One of the problems that I faced in gathering data through the informant group method, was the fact that some people were reluctant to voice their opinions to me because I was a member of the Trust. This related particularly to the disbursement of grants and their use. I found that I had to be creative in getting around this problem. When I sensed that someone was either reluctant to speak about an issue or was deliberately withholding information, I made it a point to give this issue my most meticulous attention. I addressed the issue with as many people as I could, and I found, often, that the information which had been suppressed by one source, would come to light through another. I also made it a point to find out everything that was possible about the individual concerned, such that the reason for the evasion would become explicable and inform my understanding of the social dynamic at work. As there was a cumulative process of data gathering, information which had been suppressed in one session, due to a dynamic between informants which was not always clear at the time, would often emerge in another.

Inducing people to participate in an informant group session, was another difficulty that I experienced. Some came because of the personal connection that had been established with my family, through the work of the Trust; others, because they had received grants from the Trust; yet others came as a favour to my research assistant and her father, who were of good social standing in the village. The High Street traders, for instance, were only able to come during the afternoon when their stores were, temporarily, closed. The women who were homemakers led very busy lives between childcare, household chores and the care of the elderly, and struggled to make time for me. The fishermen, except for those who laid the night net, went out to sea at all hours of the day and night. Therefore, it was very difficult to schedule sessions with them. This added much uncertainty to these informant sessions but also an element of spontaneity, as I had to be ready to have a session whenever a group of people turned up, as they did with little or no notice.

Despite these difficulties I found that the informant group method, as I have described its use, was most productive in the preliminary phase of data gathering.

I did not, however, regard the information obtained from this method as conclusive data. The data was indicative rather than definitive. It had differing levels of reliability. Once the preliminary data was obtained it was reviewed at some length, in terms of my research problem; the issues which required specific and detailed examination were identified; and a plan formulated for the second phase of fieldwork. It served as an important foundation for the identification of significant issues, and the formulation of hypotheses. It was, therefore, the corpus of data which became indispensable, for the next step of the research. It is after several informant group sessions on every major activity and institution in the community, that I refined my research problem into its most acute form, and designed the structure of the in-depth interview (Bryman, 2001). This was the second phase of my research, and the data collected during the first phase was a guide and an indication for the design of the investigation in phase two. Here, the case-study and the in-depth interview were the main methods of enquiry. It is the data from the second phase which provided me with that depth upon which to build my analysis.

During the second phase of my fieldwork I relied mainly on two methods -- the in-depth interview and the case-study. In the interview, I explored the interactions and the behaviour of a single individual and the decisions which preceded it. It was based around a design, though not a questionnaire. The design consisted of several themes which were examined, sequentially, in the course of the interview. Each theme was further broken down into a series of issues. I did a hundred such interviews. As with the key informants, I did my best to ensure that these individuals represented a cross section of this community in terms of age, gender, occupation and residence in the various neighbourhoods of the village. In each and every case, I obtained informed consent before proceeding with the interview. It is from these interviews that I was able to gather information on the strategising by individuals, and further information on networks and institutions. I also obtained information on behaviour, attitudes, norms and the main decisions of an individual. It also allowed me to explore the various networks which were important for an individual in this community. I found that in terms of the information that I had gained from informant sessions, what was not

touched upon by a respondent, in an interview, was as significant as what was. This sensitised me, the ethnographer, to potential points of tension in the community, as well as issues for further investigation. Thus, I found that the interview provided me with the opportunity to deepen and refine the inferences and hypotheses, which were the result of the informant group sessions. The sort of intensive questioning that is possible in this type of interview, allowed for the exploration of 'particular' cases, of general trends, and so to come to stronger conclusions about the trends.

The main problem that I encountered with this method was the fear on the part of interviewees, that information confidentially revealed in the course of an interview, would be used in a manner detrimental to their interest. Another concern, articulated by an informant as an explanation for the withholding of information, was that people did not want the Trust or any of its members to get to know too much about other sources of aid. This was particularly the case where we had, for instance, helped to repair an engine and the respondent had received aid for the same purpose, from another source.

The other method which I used during this phase was the case study. Here, the sequence of activity of an event or a project or an institution was examined, through the interview of key participants. Essentially, I refer to an exercise in which an institution, episode or development intervention is examined in terms of its historical sequence, so that the participants in each of its sequences are clearly identified, and the rationale for their behaviour is established. This involves sessions with many different people. I conducted case-studies of the fisheries cooperative; the technology and relationships of fishing; the temple; the commerce of the High Street; microfinance institutions; the health institutions of the region; and the caste-politics dynamic of the region. I also did a case-study of the various educational institutions available to this community in Galle, Hikkaduwa and Ambalangoda, and the ways in which these resources were utilised in the aspirations towards the future. In each of these case-studies, it was necessary to identify the situation before the tsunami, its impact and the way in which the activity or institution regenerated itself, subsequently.

The way that I framed my research problem meant that some part of my data had to be obtained from locations outside Sinhapura. I now describe this part of my fieldwork, briefly.

My contact with central government institutions began with several sessions with the Grama Niladhari, at his office in Sinhapura. These were followed by visits to the Divisional Secretariat in Hikkaduwa, and the District Secretariat in Galle. I was able to get information relating to the government's relief initiatives and the housing programme handled by these regional offices, as well as the problems and issues that they had to contend with in the days after the tsunami. Facts and figures relating to categories of damage in the Galle District were made available to me.

To supplement this information I visited institutions such as commercial banks in Hikkaduwa and Galle, Tsunami Mediation Boards in the region surrounding Hikkaduwa, and the Ministry of Justice and Law Reform in Colombo. I obtained data on tsunami loans and on the way grievances pertaining to the distribution of tsunami relief, by the Divisional and District Secretariats, were being addressed by the Mediation Boards and the Justice Ministry, which had set up a special programme for this purpose, at the regional level.

My main source of information regarding local government institutions was the Urban Council (UC) in Hikkaduwa. In the course of several sessions with the Chairman, the Vice-chairman and other officials of this office I was able to get a sense of the role played by local government in this region, after the tsunami. This was in the context of little tsunami aid being channelled through this avenue, by the central government, and the creative ways in which local government politicians satisfied their electorate. Besides the UC, I was able to secure several informant sessions with an ex-UC member, who belonged to the party which was in opposition in the UC, at this time. This individual, who had been very helpful to us in the work of the Trust, proved to be a mine of information about local government politics. A session with a Provincial Councillor of the Southern Province, based in Tangalle, gave me a perspective on local government politics at the provincial level in the south.

In collecting data from the state agencies based in Colombo, Hikkaduwa and Galle, I was concerned with acquiring a sense of the interaction between fishing communities and these arms of government, as well as the actions taken by these agencies in the aftermath of the tsunami. I visited the Department of Fisheries, the Ceylon Fishery Harbours Corporation (CFHC), the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC), and the National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA). In visiting the main fisheries harbours

along the coast, from Panadura to Hambanthota, my aim was to get an impression of the wider damage suffered by the fishing industry. In Galle I had to get permission from the Commander of the Naval Base, *Dakshina* (adjacent to the fisheries harbour), in order to enter the fisheries harbour, as the Galle harbour had been attacked by the LTTE a few months previously.

My principal object in visiting the Coast Conservation Department (CCD) was to obtain information regarding the 100m buffer zone placed on reconstruction, on the south-western coastline. I was interested in the rationale behind this adaptation of the existing 35m rule, and the processes by which embargoes on construction on the coastline were established. From the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB) offices in Colombo I obtained some insights into the post-tsunami revival of the tourist industry, as well as their views on the 100m buffer zone.

In the case of the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) the object of my visit was to gather information about its activities as well as that of its predecessor, TAFREN. I was particularly interested in the way in which RADA coordinated the agreements between the government and various organisations, regarding the construction of housing schemes. In this connection, it seemed important to visit the Urban Development Authority (UDA) as this institution had an important role in overseeing the construction plans of these various organisations, from an architectural and engineering point of view. Thereafter, I visited the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) to get some information about its role as a new institution, and the various measures taken to provide an early warning in the case of future tsunamis.

In the collection of data from the Non-Governmental Organisations which were involved in relief and reconstruction work along this coastline, based in Colombo, with regional offices in Galle and Hikkaduwa, I visited as many of the offices in Colombo as was feasible and several in Galle and Hikkaduwa.¹⁰¹ I was concerned with their policy and practice as well as, of getting a sense of the commonality and difference between these organisations. I was particularly interested in the organisations which laid a heavy emphasis on microfinance, in their post-tsunami work. Amongst those organisations which started purely microfinance activities in the region, in early 2005, some were

¹⁰¹ I focused on the organisations which were involved in direct relief work in Sinhapura, as well as the large international organisations working on the south-western coast.

large NGOs from the neighbouring countries of South Asia. In this context, a visit to the Lanka Micro Finance Practitioners Association based in a suburb of Colombo which, in mid-2008, had just begun to function, was useful.

During my visits to the new housing settlements, where tsunami-affected, Sinhapura residents had been re-settled, and the tsunami-affected communities along the coastline, from Panadura to Hambanthota, I followed a simple principle. In examining the coastal communities I sought, as quickly as I could, to develop a framework in terms of which these communities could be investigated. Given the time that was available, this turned out to be a suitable approach. I followed a similar approach in the tsunami resettlement communities.

As far as all these organisations were concerned I went to them with a fair idea of the information that I wanted, and the problems that I wished to explore. Yet, what I knew in the early stage was, at times, insufficient for me to design a well-structured interview. In such instances, I began with an informant session and moved towards an interview at the end. In other cases, the information that I had was sufficient to plan the interview, and to explore it systematically. In a few instances, such as the fisheries harbours, some observation was part of the exercise. Altogether the information from these sources supplemented the data that I collected from Sinhapura, and set it in a context which made that data much more meaningful than it would otherwise have been.

As far as the institutions external to Sinhapura were concerned, I presented myself as a social researcher interested in the way that the policies and practices, of these organisations, contributed to the reproduction of coastal communities. I obtained informed consent in each and every instance, before proceeding with data collection.

Chapter 3 -- The Social Processes

Introduction

In this chapter my focus is on the social processes of Sinhapura. In order to understand the way in which these processes were affected by the tsunami it is necessary to understand the processes of this community at the time of the tsunami. My acquaintance with Sinhapura prior to the tsunami was that of a visitor. What follows is, therefore, a reconstruction based on many sessions with informants.

Sinhapura is located in a south-western coastal region which is different from many other coastal regions in Sri Lanka. It is largely Sinhala, largely Buddhist, with a strong urban influence and with good access to educational and health facilities. This is a region which has been shaped by the interaction between caste and politics. Particular historical processes of regional formation have had implications for resource flows into individual communities. In Sinhapura, the result of this has been that its economic and administrative importance has waxed and waned over the last sixty years.

Three types of resources were important in the economic life of Sinhapura at the time of the tsunami. They were fisheries; trade and external employment; and, the resources such as services and employment made available to the village through governmental institutions and caste-oriented political processes.¹⁰²

A perception of the nature of these resources available to Sinhapura is necessary in order to understand my discussion of the social processes which were taking place in Sinhapura, before the tsunami. If, for instance, Sinhapura had been located in a region where the caste to which most of its residents belong (Karava) had been the dominant caste, the Town Council (TC) and the police station would not have been moved out of Sinhapura, and it would have continued to be the important administrative centre that it had been in the 1970s. What this demonstrates is that the region in which Sinhapura was situated, had much to do with the nature of the community that it was at the time of the tsunami.

The flow of resources of the three types categorised above, and the extent to which this flow was a product of regional processes, is the focus in the first half of this chapter.

¹⁰² A preliminary account of these resources has already been given in Chapter 1.

The focus in the second half, is on the processes which generated the types of households characteristic of Sinhapura, at the time of the tsunami. The differential strategies through which resources were appropriated by different households and the concomitant ways in which aspirations came to be formed, are examined.

My concern is with the way in which a variety of resources, capital in Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) sense, became available to this community and the way in which these resources were utilised in the progress towards its future, at the time of the tsunami. I am, therefore, interested in exploring the types of capital that were regarded as having value, in this cultural context, and the way in which this found expression in the aspirations of households and individuals.

The Resources of Sinhapura

The Fishing Industry

During the last 200 years fishing has been the major activity in Sinhapura. Important changes that have taken place in the fishing industry in this community, in the last 70 years, derive from the way in which the policies of the central government have interacted with the community. In order to comprehend the significance of this, one has to understand the wider, national context of the fisheries industry in Sri Lanka.

The social processes of Sinhapura, detailed in the second half of this chapter, can be understood only in the light of the interaction between national fisheries policy and the local context. Sinhapura, at the time of the tsunami, was a product of this interaction.

Beginning in the 1940s, and accelerating after independence, in 1948, successive governments initiated a series of measures to improve the fishing industry in Sri Lanka. The stated policies were: to enhance national wealth; to improve the nutrition of the population; to increase the income and to develop the lifestyles of fishing communities; and, to stimulate economic growth in particular geographical regions. While the measures mentioned above have meant that, in the last 70 years, many fishing communities have seen a rise in income, the catch has remained substantially below what is considered desirable in nutritional terms for the country. Dr. Champa Amarasiri of the National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA) stated that in 2008 fish

consumption per capita, per annum, was 15-17 kilogrammes, which was considerably below the desirable national level.¹⁰³

In the 1950s and 1960s the government-initiated innovations were: boats with outboard engines; nylon nets; and, fibreglass hulls. The new technology was accompanied by the establishment of various institutions and services.¹⁰⁴ The Department of Fisheries founded in 1941, was intended to provide a wide range of services: to increase the overall catch of fish; to cater to the needs of the consumer; to enhance the income and welfare of fishermen.¹⁰⁵ The Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC) was created to handle the marketing and the sale of fish. Amarasinghe (1989) states that the CFC has not been a success, as it has been unable to compete with private fish merchants -- the *mudalalis* -- and has not handled more than 2.7% of the total marine landings of the country. It has to be noted, however, that the CFC has performed an important function of being a check on the monopolising tendencies of fish merchants. In this sense, the figure of 2.7% is not an appropriate indicator of the overall success of the CFC. The Ceylon Fishery Harbours Corporation (CFHC) was formed to construct and maintain harbours. In 2008, there were eleven main harbours around the country managed by this organisation. The CFHC provides the following services: fresh water; ice; electricity for maintenance activities and repairs; petrol, kerosene and diesel; and, protection for the boats berthed in the harbour. In addition to these institutions the government established ice plants; repair workshops; initiated transport services and started the fisheries co-operative movement.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ In October 2010 the Minister of Fisheries made a policy statement in which, amongst other objectives, he stated that it was the hope of his ministry to increase fish production, per annum, threefold. Source: Franklin R. Satyapalan, *The Island* of 24/10/2010.

¹⁰⁴ The problem of capital was addressed by various government schemes: the issue of motorized boats under a loan scheme through the co-operatives; loan schemes for the purchase of outboard motors to be attached to artisanal craft (1962); the issue of large mechanized craft (3.5 ton boats) through co-operatives under a hire purchase scheme (1958); highly subsidized loan schemes through state banks. Source: www.fisheries.gov.lk Accessed on 10 April 2007. Interviews with officials at the Department of Fisheries, the CFC, the CFHC.

¹⁰⁵ For a comprehensive account of the various state policies instituted in Sri Lanka since independence, in 1948, refer Bavinck (1984).

¹⁰⁶ The co-operative movement has been active since the 1940s and fisheries has been an important component of this movement. The co-operatives have had both consumer and producer functions. The fisheries co-operatives have also been selling institutions but have never been able to compete successfully with fish merchants. For details of the working of co-operative societies in Sri Lanka see Bavinck (1984). For an account of the importance of the middleman in the fisheries industry see Acheson (1981).

The policies instituted by the government interacted with local processes, to produce a wide variety of coastal communities around Sri Lanka. The southern and western coasts of the country illustrate this diversity. Akurala and Thotagamuwa were completely artisanal communities at the time of the tsunami as they had not had the access to capital, at the level required, in the way that Sinhapura had. At the other end of the spectrum, communities like Mirissa, Hikkaduwa and Devinuwara had been able to invest in multi-day boats. Hikkaduwa in particular was 'capital rich', from tourism, at the time when the multi-day boat initiative was launched by the government. In these communities harbours had been constructed by the CFHC. Weligama, like Sinhapura, did not have many multi-day boats but did have mechanised *wallams* and some canoes. Thus, while it was not a rich community like Hikkaduwa; neither was it a totally artisanal one like Akurala. Ambalangoda was famous for its affluent fish merchants. Hambanthota was a fishing community with much variety: many multi-day boats, but as many motor boats and canoes.

In the 1960s when the government initiated new technology, Sinhapura, as a community, with its trade with India had the capital, at that time, to undertake the transition from artisanal craft to mechanised *wallams*. Thus, Sinhapura became one of those communities with a large number of mechanised *wallams*, where artisanal craft had little importance. It is these innovations in technology, and the institutions and services provided by the central government, which enabled Sinhapura to utilise its capital and transform itself from a purely artisanal fishing community into one that was well on its way to mechanisation. The increased income became a source of credit and facilitated investment in a diversity of ventures.

Fish caught at sea is brought to the harbours and to the beaches. At the harbours the fish is usually sold, by auction, to the prominent middlemen who transport it to distribution centres in, among others, Colombo and Kandy. Alternatively, it is sold directly to retailers, tourist resorts and the army. On the beaches the sale is usually by auction. At other times, the fish are sold in terms of previous arrangements with fish merchants. As mentioned before, in Sinhapura, the fresh fish are sold by auction on the beach.

The nature of the relationship between boat owners and traders varies from geographical area to area in Sri Lanka. These relationships arise due to the fact that boat owners often

need liquid cash for consumption purposes, at one end of the scale, and capital related purposes, at the other end. Fishermen, for the most part, are reluctant to deal with commercial institutions. They prefer to borrow from an individual with whom they have a personal connection, rather than from an impersonal organization. In Sri Lanka, the fish traders and merchants perform important functions of credit and insurance, as far as the fishermen are concerned. In Sinhapura as *wallam* owners are relatively affluent they do not require binding agreements with traders which would provide them with liquid cash.

The practice of 'boat tying' gives trader-creditors first claim on the catch (Amarasinghe, 1989). Hikkaduwa and Galle have many such arrangements. In Sinhapura and Kotigama, however, there is no such practice as the fish is sold by auction on the beach. Merlijn (1989) describes how the keen competition between fish merchants in Sarawak, Malaysia ensures that fishermen wield significant bargaining power, in relation to the creditor/debtor relationship.¹⁰⁷

In the 1970s the government promoted the export of high value fish products, prawns in particular.¹⁰⁸ This was in the context of the emergence of international markets for frozen seafood products and the high income elasticities of comparatively rich consumers, in the developed as well as the developing world (Platteau, 1989). This phenomenon entailed the involvement of capitalist giants in this sector, worldwide. In India, for instance, industrial concerns such as Kelvinator, Tata and Union Carbide diversified into prawn fishing (Platteau, 1989). This has meant the support by the state of big business, and the concomitant marginalization of the artisanal sector. In Sri Lanka, the multi-national Unilever got involved in large-scale prawn farming on the western coast. The venture was not a great success and, subsequently, abandoned (Senaratne, 1987). Today, the export of luxury seafood products is on a much smaller scale. Investors did not see Sinhapura as a location which had potential for these ventures, but on a minor scale prawns and crabs were bred in the river behind Sinhapura, for sale to the tourist hotels in Hikkaduwa.

¹⁰⁷ For a detailed account of a fishing community in the Kelantan state of Malaysia see Firth (1966). See Stirrat (1988) for an account of the fishermen's connections with traders in western Sri Lanka.

¹⁰⁸ See Reyntjens (1989) and Senaratne (1987) for a comprehensive account of the problems of prawn farming on the western coast of Sri Lanka in the 1980s.

In the 1990s the state introduced multi-day boats to the Sri Lankan fisheries industry. This was an imperative arising from the over-fishing of inshore, coastal waters. It also enabled the fishermen to access the sea beyond the 5-10 kilometres from the shore, which is the territory of the small mechanized boats. The multi-day boats were allocated to fishermen by the government through the fisheries co-operative societies.¹⁰⁹ Under this scheme half of the cost of the boat would be borne by the members of the co-operative society themselves, while the other half would be a combination of a government guaranteed bank loan and an outright grant from the government. Unlike the earlier technological change in the 1960s, to outboard motors, this change to multi-day boats could not be financed at the local level. Although Sinhapura lacked a harbour suitable for multi-day boats a few individuals who were able to mobilise the necessary capital responded to this initiative and purchased multi-day boats. These boats were berthed in the harbours of Galle and Hikkaduwa. For a time it looked as if a new era had dawned, in the fisheries history of Sinhapura. With government assistance it appeared likely that more individuals would buy multi-day boats and, eventually, that a harbour would be built in Sinhapura. However, the new, multi-day boat owners found that running such an enterprise involved more risk and more expenses than they had foreseen. The result was that many could not service the repayment of their co-operative society loans.¹¹⁰ Eventually, the fisheries co-operative society in Sinhapura ceased to function because of the conflict over this issue.

The construction of an anchorage in the natural harbour (inlet) in Sinhapura was started in 1995, owing to the political pressure upon government from a combination of sources: the Urban Council; the fisheries co-operative societies of Sinhapura and the surrounding communities; the Fisheries Inspector; the Co-operatives Inspector; fishermen and their families. However, when there was a cabinet reshuffle and the minister for fisheries changed the construction was halted leaving a half built ridge of stone -- an incomplete breakwater -- jutting out into the sea on the south side of the inlet of Sinhapura. This incomplete breakwater had a disastrous impact on wave action. It meant that the waves became very strong at this point, such that during the rough

¹⁰⁹ These societies were established under the Co-Operatives Act in many of these coastal fishing communities. They were formed with the idea of being self-help organisations as well as providing credit and information on issues such as health and sanitation. Source: Personal Communication with the Co-Operatives Inspector, Hikkaduwa, in 2008.

¹¹⁰ Court cases have been filed against the seven individuals concerned.

season it was very difficult for *wallams* to enter the inlet and berth safely. The *wallams* ran the risk of being dashed against the ridge. Thus, during the rough season, the fishermen of Sinhapura had to berth their *wallams* on the beach in Dewata (south of Galle). In 2005 a *wallam* was destroyed by being flung against the ridge, while attempting to enter the inlet. In the process a crew member fell overboard to his death, by hitting his head on a rock. Consequent upon this episode, there were many protests by the community, including a demonstration on the Galle Road which disrupted all vehicular traffic for a couple of hours. The agitation which was the result of this incident, put pressure on the government and culminated in the construction of the anchorage being resumed and completed, in 2008.

At the time of the tsunami, in 2004, the big issue that the fishing community in Sinhapura was concerned with was the problem of whether the log-centred fishing by multi-day boats was reducing the volume of fish closer to shore.¹¹¹ This was particularly an issue for the mechanised *wallams* which fish 5-6 kilometres from shore. These *wallams* were finding the fishing enterprise less productive than it had been at any time in the previous 20 years. Apart from this, there were various reasons given for this downturn in fisheries: the impact of the illegal ‘light course’ and dynamite blasting methods; global climate trends; and, Sri Lanka’s narrow continental shelf. There was, furthermore, the prohibitive cost of fuel which was beginning to have an impact on profits, compared with those of earlier times.

These were the characteristics of the fishing industry, in Sinhapura, in the period before the tsunami. Sinhapura did not have the political influence to secure a large harbour for itself. Therefore, the *wallam* type of craft and the level of investment and the working capital which was required to operate the craft, came to be its reality. It is in this manner that Sinhapura had developed, in the years prior to the tsunami.

I shall now present a few cases of fishing households and their investments. These households will be discussed in different contexts again in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Wijeratne *Mudalali*’s family had always been involved in the fisheries industry, both going to sea as well as trading in fish, particularly *jadi*. When the move towards

¹¹¹ This refers to the method of fishing where a natural object such as a log or a man made one such as a buoy, is floated on the ocean surface to encourage the aggregation of fish. This device, called a Fish Aggregation Device (FAD), is used to attract pelagic fish.

mechanised craft got underway he was one of the first to make this investment, as he had the capital to do so. He used such contacts as he had, both in trade and in politics, to launch this venture. In time, the success of the mechanised *wallam* enabled him not only to buy more *wallams* but also to invest in the far more expensive multi-day boat.

Jayatissa's trajectory has been somewhat different. In his early years he was a crewman. However, he soon acquired a reputation as a skilled crew member who was a good man to have on a boat. In time, he managed to save enough capital to buy a *wallam*, through his own savings and with some help from kin. From here onwards some proportion of his profit as owner had been set aside and he had bought, by the time of the tsunami, his second and third *wallams*.

Rohan's *wallam* was bought with heavy financing. Before he had paid off this loan he had bought a three wheeler, also on credit, with the attendant high monthly repayment. His wife's kin in the hill country helped him put together the deposit required for this venture. At the time of the tsunami, he had plans for using different sources of credit for the expansion of his income-generating activities, which included the purchase of land in the interior.

Bennet was a senior crew member. At the time of the tsunami, he was in his early forties. Though acknowledged as being good at his job he had never managed to save enough to buy his own *wallam*. According to him, this had much to do with the fact that he had three children to bring up and to educate and, therefore, found it difficult to save.

Wimalasiri was also a senior crew member in his late forties. In addition to this he had a small canoe for inshore fishing. The combined income, from crewing on a *wallam* and from the canoe, appeared sufficient for Wimalasiri. He had no aspiration to buy a *wallam*. His three children were all independent. He told me that he received a reasonable income from inshore fishing in his canoe, during the rough season, because with so many *wallams* going 5-6 kilometres out to sea the inshore area was not as over-fished as it used to be. Furthermore, he did not want all the trouble -- dealing with the vagaries of crew; finding the capital for each trip out to sea -- which running a boat involves.

In early life, Gunasena had been employed in various parts of the country. When he came back to Sinhapura he invested some of his earnings in the purchase of a *wallam*

and a canoe. He, himself, had never been an active fisherman. It is his eldest son who had learnt the skill and was, in effect, in charge of the two craft owned by him.

The Problems faced by the Fishing Industry

In its expansion the fishing industry has encountered a series of problems. Sri Lanka has a narrow continental shelf and a rocky seabed which makes trawling difficult. The country has a 200 kilometre Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), according to the UN Law of the Sea. Within this zone, it has the rights to mineral and other resources.¹¹²

However, foreign vessels break the law and fish with impunity, within the EEZ, and derive much greater benefit from the wealth of the zone than does Sri Lanka.¹¹³ There have been some efforts to reach a compromise in terms of the provision, by the Sri Lankan state, of harbour facilities to these foreign vessels: an Unloading Fish Licence; and a landing rights licence issued by the Board of Investment (BOI). Under new regulations all foreign vessels which discharge stock at any fishery harbour, anchorage or commercial port have to obtain a permit and sell 25% of the catch to the CFC.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, many foreign vessels (approximately 500 at any given moment) fish to the south of Sri Lanka -- beyond the EEZ -- so that Sri Lankan fishermen do not have clear access to these waters. Sri Lankan multi-day boats cannot compete with the superior technology of these foreign vessels. They are larger, faster and have a greater carrying capacity as far as the catch is concerned.

In theory, foreign vessels fish in international waters (outside the EEZ), unload in Sri Lankan harbours and air freight the fish out of the country. In reality, these vessels fish both in international and Sri Lankan waters (within the EEZ), unload in Sri Lankan harbours and air freight abroad. There is no tax revenue to the country and the nutritional entitlement is compromised.¹¹⁵ In 2010 the Minister of Fisheries stated that he expects to have installed effective vessel monitoring systems, which would track the entry of unauthorised vessels into Sri Lankan waters.¹¹⁶

The government has attempted to address this problem through a series of policies which have not, however, been successful. Communities such as Sinhapura have the

¹¹² Source: www.fisheries.gov.lk Accessed 10 April 2007.

¹¹³ Source: Personal Communication with the Manager, Ceylon Fisheries Corporation in 2008.

¹¹⁴ Special Gazette Notification 1555/13 of 26 June 2008. The Sri Lanka Government Gazette is a weekly publication, dating back to colonial times, which details all government news and advertisements.

¹¹⁵ Source: Interview with the Manager, Ceylon Fisheries Corporation.

¹¹⁶ Source: Franklin R. Satyapalan, The Island of 24/10/2010.

perception that the government has been ineffective in dealing with foreign vessels, and that the catch which is their entitlement, is going into the storage containers of foreign, multi-day boats. The fishermen of Sinhapura feel that their traditional hunting grounds have been invaded and that their losses are substantial.

The industry has also faced another problem. While the government realised the importance of mechanisation for the growth of the fishing economy, it has, nevertheless, had to respond to the pressures of the small-scale, artisanal sector as a political force. This is particularly so in the context of foreign multi-day boats encroaching onto the Sri Lankan EEZ and the perception of small communities, such as Sinhapura, that they are of marginal importance as far as the government is concerned. Fishing areas, both in the north and the south of the country, have always been well represented in parliament. Therefore, there has been political pressure on successive governments to respond to the needs of the artisanal sector. Politically motivated initiatives, to address the needs of the artisanal sector, have rarely been successful. There has been considerable opposition from the artisanal sector to the introduction of the mechanised mode of fishing. This opposition has been partially successful because of the electoral power wielded by fishing communities on their parliamentary representatives. The consequence of this has been that the state has not invested the required capital to create an industry of large-scale, commercial, mechanised fishing. Nor has the state entered into any arrangements with outside interests, in the form of joint ventures.

The state in Sri Lanka, unlike in Kerala for instance, has not had to face the unenviable task of balancing the vote banks of fishing communities with the interests of large-scale entrepreneurs. It has not had to mediate between the artisanal and the mechanised sectors unlike in Kerala, the Coromandel Coast in Tamil Nadu and in Thailand, where there have been conflicts between these two sectors (Kurien, 1985; Kurien and Achari, 1990; Bavinck, 1997; Johnson, 1997). The mechanised and artisanal sectors have managed to co-exist, due to the fact that the former is still, relatively, small and not a significant threat to the latter.¹¹⁷ Platteau (1989) states that Sri Lanka is unusual in this,

¹¹⁷ This has something to do with the productive capacity of Sri Lanka, as a small country, in terms of export as well as domestic consumption.

as most Third World governments have tended to focus on mechanised fishing, leaving the artisanal sector to fend for itself.¹¹⁸

NGOs involved in development have not promoted mechanised fishing in Sri Lanka for a variety of reasons: the narrow continental shelf; the fact that small trawlers are not suitable for Sri Lankan waters; and, the fact that the large trawlers which would be compatible with Sri Lankan conditions, necessitate heavy investment. The imperatives of development interventions, as far as the fisheries sector is concerned, have been the improvement of the technology of craft and gear. Bailey, Cycon & Morris (1986) critique a paradigm of development which does not acknowledge that technology transfer is value-laden, and that it disrupts the social dynamics of fishing communities. Thus, Sri Lanka's fishing industry has not been infiltrated by international capital, in a significant way. This can be contrasted with other countries of the South Asian region, such as India, where development efforts have been focussed heavily on the mechanised sector (Bailey, Cycon, Morris, 1986; Kurien, 1985; Platteau, 1989). At the same time fishing communities in Sri Lanka are being, increasingly, integrated into the wider market economy of fish. This is happening, through the demand for luxury seafood products such as prawn, lobster and crab. Furthermore, the problems of over-fishing exist (Kurien, 1985; Kurien & Achari, 1990). As Alexander puts it: "Overfishing occurs when the point of (short term) profit maximisation is higher than the maximum sustainable yield of the fishery." (1982:260).

Another problem that the industry has had to face relates to the methods of fishing which are condemned as being harmful to the industry but which continue to be practised, by those looking for short-term financial gain. These methods are: light course; the use of hooks to catch dolphins and whales; and dynamite blasting. The equipment in these cases can be very expensive but the returns are commensurately high. This is a problem that the fishermen of Sinhapura face. These harmful methods of fishing are prevalent in the south-western region, conducted by the fishing combines of the larger towns, consisting of entrepreneurs and fisherman backed by regional politicians.

¹¹⁸ Mechanised refers to the capital intensive, production oriented, commercial, large-scale fishing conglomerates based on a modern growth model. Artisanal is the traditional, small-scale, subsistence-oriented fishing and is characterised by relatively low capital intensity (Platteau, 1989).

Sinhapura belongs to a type of community on the south-western coast which stands between the heavy mechanization of the multi-day boat and the artisanal fishery. Disputes regarding government policy -- support for mechanization or the exercise of care in relation to the income of the artisanal sector -- do not find easy resolution.¹¹⁹

Trade and External Employment

I describe now two other areas which are of importance to the economy of Sinhapura -- trade and external employment, both governmental and otherwise. The High Street in Sinhapura is the centre of trade and commerce. It is the place where a variety of consumer goods and services are available to the people of Sinhapura and to the small communities of the area. The volume of business depends, to a large extent, on the success of the fishing enterprise.

By 1875, British-style public schools set up in many regions of the country had been established in Galle and Ambalangoda. With access to education, up to secondary level, the people of this region were able to secure employment in government in a transferable service: the police; the railways; the postal service; the administrative services; the teaching profession; and the medical services. The opportunities for external employment saw the beginning of a trend, in the early decades of the 20th Century, towards movement away from the village. The village economy derived little benefit from this employment as little of this income was remitted back to Sinhapura. Apart from employment in Sri Lanka, some of these people have reached positions of eminence in countries such as the USA, the UK and Australia. Very few, however, have maintained their connections with the village.¹²⁰

Employment in government service was at a premium: it was seen as permanent and there was the security of a pension upon retirement. At the time of the tsunami in 2004, there were 74 persons working in government departments: amongst others, the Survey Department; the Agriculture Department; the Plywood Corporation; the National Youth

¹¹⁹ The important conclusions regarding the fishing industry as revealed by this study are presented in Chapter 6.

¹²⁰ Every now and again people in Sinhapura will mention a relative, or an ancestor, who has achieved prominence in Colombo, in important institutions in other parts of the country, and also outside the country. This is usually followed by the statement that they have no connection with Sinhapura today.

Services Centre; the Samurdhi Department; and the Ceylon Electricity Board. Avenues of external employment were also provided by tourism; the garment factories; the retail trade and security firms. 104 persons from Sinhapura were employed in these sectors. There were also those employed in the Middle-East -- 29 men in a variety of occupations such as driving; fork lift driving; life-guard work; dairy work. There were 7 individuals, all women, who were employed by the development organisations working in the village.

Sinhapura as a centre for business goes back to the time, more than half a century ago, when the trade on the High Street was dominated by the *jadi* retail outlets selling the cured fish which had been brought back from India. For several decades Sinhapura enjoyed a lucrative trade with selected areas of southern India, on both its western and eastern coasts. People from Sinhapura went to India in sea-going vessels, built in Sinhapura, laden with salt and huge wooden jars called *peeppa*. In India the appropriate fish was bought, cleaned and salted, and tightly packed into the *peeppa* and stored for three months. This preparation, called *jadi*, was then brought back to Sinhapura along with other consumer goods such as roofing tiles. This cured fish was sold at the several *jadi* retail outlets on the High Street. From the 19th century Sinhapura was famous for this commodity.

The natural harbour in Sinhapura became a regular port for customs purposes and had a permanent Customs and Excise Office beginning around the 1900s. Seven or eight families handled the *jadi* trade, together with their employees. Sinhapura's economy, at the time, revolved around this activity. Its heyday was in the first three or four decades of the 20th century. These families were the main sources of credit for the community. In the 1960s the government began to impose restrictions on that export of foreign exchange which was necessary to keep the Indian trade afloat. The families involved in this trade turned to other activities. *Jadi mudalalis* ceased to be the prosperous people in the community and its leaders. The younger generation began to look towards education and external employment to realise their aspirations. Furthermore, this decline coincided

with the fishing boom such that the import of *jadi* ceased to be important to the economy.¹²¹

With the introduction of the new technologies in fishing, incomes increased and capital began to be more plentiful in the community. The mechanised *wallams* were able to make a greater catch of fish, and to provide higher incomes both to boat owners and to crew members. The demand for consumer goods and services in the village grew. This demand was satisfied by people from the community, with the descendants of those who had engaged in the *jadi* trade now carrying on retail and service enterprises on the High Street.

Hikkaduwa had by then grown in size and importance, and was providing a range of goods and services. For the High Street in Sinhapura, competing with Hikkaduwa, the advantage lay in proximity. For people whose mode of consumer expenditure consists of shopping for a few items on a daily basis, the essentials have to be at their doorstep. The increase of cash in the economy, i.e., disposable income, saw an increase in local business opportunity which expressed itself in the establishment of new stores and an expansion in the range of goods, from basic essentials to a wide range of consumer products. Located on the High Street at the time of the tsunami were: nine grocery stores; a greengrocer; a garment retailer; a firewood and coconut retailer; a hardware store; two stationery stores; a newspaper vendor; a retailer of seafood; a peanut vendor; an ice-cream vendor; a gas cylinder retailer; a retailer of engine spare parts; a retail store for fishing nets; a bicycle sale and repair business; an ornamental fish outlet.

As Sinhapura expanded, the demand for services such as masonry, electrical work, carpentry, and plumbing grew. The traders of the High Street responded to these demands and at the time of the tsunami there were: three communication centres; a carpentry workshop; two beauty salons; a welding centre; a betting centre; a photography centre; a sign painting service; a three wheeler repair service; a ritual practitioner; a printing press; a music centre; a DVD library; and, several electricians, masons and plumbers. I give below a few examples of High Street businesses to

¹²¹ Source: A series of informant sessions on the history of Sinhapura with older informants in the village such as Wilbert and Gunasena.

illustrate the scope and extent of this activity, in this community, at the time of the tsunami.

The history of grocery stores in the High Street is one of quick turnover. Few people have managed to make a success of this enterprise. Some of those who have attempted this have inherited either the premises or an actual business itself. Hiranthi's case was different. Personal misfortune and the cutting short of her education led her to try her hand at a grocery store. Her husband's kinfolk helped her both with the capital which had to be raised, and with useful contacts.

Kanchana, at the time of the tsunami, was engaged in a business selling spare parts for outboard engines, inherited by her husband from his father. Her brother, before he travelled to Italy, had been running a repair service. Kanchana, as she told me, felt that the repair arm would complement the spare parts business and was exploring the possibility of combining the two businesses.

Sushila's father had owned a *jadi* shop on the High Street in the 1950s, but the business had been defunct for many years at the time of Sushila's marriage in the early 1990s. The land and premises were given to Sushila as her dowry. Situated in a prime location on the High Street, just by the main foot path leading to the inlet where the boats are berthed, this gift enabled Sushila and her husband to cater to the particular needs of the fishermen. The eating house that they set up provided fishermen with hampers of food when they set out to sea, and a sustaining meal upon their return. This couple have two children, twins deaf from birth, for whom they have to incur considerable expenditure for their medical treatment.

Wilbert inherited a printing business from his father. At one stage it had served the area well in that the type of printing which the press handled, with its rather simple level of technology, was what the customers wanted at the price that they could afford. However, as time went on and new technology superseded the old, Wilbert was unable to make the investment to install this new technology. As a result, his business was almost defunct at the time of the tsunami.

Shanika's husband, Viraj, is not from the village. They live in a house inherited by Shanika from her father. Viraj had learnt the skill of welding and had obtained employment in a major governmental organisation. In addition to this external employment he had started a little workshop at home to provide the service of welding both for domestic and commercial purposes. This means that sometimes Viraj had to take an extended leave of absence from his regular employment with the government. Shanika, meanwhile, was entrusted with the day to day management of the venture, together with a helper. This effort at an additional income, apart from the salary from government, was primarily for the purpose of educating their three sons. They were getting the best education that the region could provide, at the time of the tsunami. Viraj and Shanika were very conscious of the fact that their educational aspirations for the boys could be realised only through a heavy financial outlay on their part.

Historically, coir rope making was an important activity in the village, engaged in by the women. Over the last 20 years, however, the demand for coir rope has dwindled, largely because of the availability of superior alternatives like nylon rope. At the village level this, together with the fact that coir rope making is an arduous activity, has meant that the younger women do not engage in it.¹²² It has also been superseded by other cottage industries which are more lucrative. Amongst these cottage crafts were: crochet work; pillow lace work (*beeralu*); the sewing of garments, tablecloths, cushion covers; fabric painting; candle making; soap making, *pappadam* making; the manufacture of sweetmeats and brown paper bags. Other small scale manufacture included the production of concrete blocks for use in house construction. The primary raw material was cement and a simple machine, obtained with a limited outlay of capital, churned out the blocks. In Sinhapura this was a family business which had, in the years prior to the tsunami, established a reputation for a good product.

The significant characteristic of all these activities was that they were supplementary sources of income. They were important during the rough (monsoon) season but were regarded as dispensable, at other times, if the time required was too great or the income generated was too low. There is a contrast to be observed with other, less affluent

¹²² The coconut husk is rotted for three months in retting pits in the river or in the lagoon. The skeins are removed, once rotted, and this is twisted into rope using the hands or a coir machine operated by three people.

communities of the region where people would undertake this type of production even though the rate of payment for their labour was low.

Traditionally, various forms of credit have been used by this community. The *jadi mudalalis* were the most popular source of credit, as long as they were the dominant figures in the village economy. As described in Chapter 1, apart from these *mudalalis*, there were money-lenders operating on a lower scale of capital, who lent only to known and trusted individuals. There was, besides, the revolving system of credit popularly known as the *seettu* (this system is prevalent in many parts of South Asia). It is a form of forced saving where several individuals contribute to a fund, on a monthly basis, and a particular individual gets this lump sum by lottery or by auction. The big problem with the *seettu* is that one must have a regular income in order to make the monthly contribution. Fishing households in Sinhapura have been loathe to get into this venture as their income is too erratic. Consequently, it is among the High Street traders that the *seettu* is in common use.

Money-lenders and the *seettu* were inadequate to service the volume of capital that a fast-growing economy required. For a brief period, during the 1980s and 1990s, commercial banks attempted to provide credit for communities of this type. However, in the aftermath of recurrent defaults in the repayment, of loans commercial banks abandoned their policy of lending to such small-scale communities.

It is at this point that microfinance attempted to supply the dearth of capital. The rhetoric, both at the national and local level, has been that microfinance performs a secondary role: it represents borrowings by women with the object of generating small avenues of income which are purely supplementary to the primary income of the household. In Sinhapura the reality has been very different. From the early 1990s it is the microfinance loan which promoted the growth of the village economy by, primarily, providing the fishing industry with the capital that it required.

Over the last 50 years, therefore, the profile of Sinhapura's economy has changed considerably and by the time of the tsunami there had been substantial diversification. The economy, at the time of the tsunami, displayed the following characteristics: the whole character of the fishing industry had changed; coir making was no longer an

important household activity; the High Street was providing a much greater range and variety of goods and services; there was variety in the avenues of external employment; and, expansion in the access to education. These characteristics resonate with the features identified by Long (2001) when he observes that the engagement in multiple enterprises; regional economic diversification; 'low economic integration'; the small scale of economic activity; and, a low level of capitalisation of the economy are features of economies of this type.

Politics, Caste and Resources

The resources available to Sinhapura in terms of the fisheries industry, trade and employment have been described. I now turn to the connection between caste identity and party political affiliation in the election of an individual to representative office, at the national and local level. An account of this historical narrative, the political trends of the south-western region during the last 80 years, is important because this interaction between caste and politics was an avenue through which Sinhapura and other communities of the region accessed resources relating to education, employment, trade, infrastructure and, fisheries. The interaction also had implications for the fact that Sinhapura was once a centre for the region and the commercial advantages of this. Successive constitutional changes have had an effect on institutions, on political representation and on the ways in which resources were accessed. In the following section I will describe the way in which the everyday decisions of the people of Sinhapura were influenced by the constitutional changes which took place, and the way that these changes shaped the social processes in the village.¹²³

Sinhapura had been a prominent regional centre prior to 1977 but had lost that prominence by the time of the tsunami, when, for instance, government institutions such as the Town Council (TC) and the regional police station were moved out of Sinhapura

¹²³ This discussion is based, largely, on informant groups as well as on sessions with key informants in the village: Gunasena a long standing member of the Communist Party and an active campaigner in several elections, both local and national; Somaratne a strong supporter of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and a campaigner in many elections; Abeyapala a strong supporter of the United National Party (UNP); Bernard the 'village historian'. It is also based on interviews with the Chairman and members of the Urban Council; a member of the southern Provincial Council; officials of both the District Secretariat and the Divisional Secretariat; an interview with a former Personal Secretary to Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka 1960-1964 & 1970-1977; an interview with a Special Advisor to the former President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksha; an interview with a Member of Parliament at various stages between 1965 and 1994.

and relocated in Hikkaduwa.¹²⁴ Up to 1977, it was members of the Communist Party, from Sinhapura, who had dominated the Town Council. Resources were, consequently, channelled to Sinhapura and, with Sinhapura established as the administrative centre for the region, trade and employment flourished. People from the surrounding communities had to come to these two institutions to transact government business. All this added to the services that Sinhapura provided for the people of the region.

With the relocation of the Town Council and the police station to Hikkaduwa, Sinhapura lost its importance as a regional centre, lost its volume of business and received, for example, little in the way of community resources from the central government. With the growth of its tourist trade, Hikkaduwa was becoming important as a commercial centre. At the same time Kotigama, to the south of Sinhapura, dominated by the Salagama caste, engaged in a sustained effort to challenge the dominance which Sinhapura had exercised up to that time, and to establish itself as the significant township of the region. This was done by affluent caste members, residing in other parts of the country, who extended their support for the community by way of donations. For instance, the educational facilities of the Kotigama school came, in time, to be far superior to those of the two schools located in Sinhapura. With, moreover, the institution of a parliamentary seat, Kotigama gained prominence in the area. Thus, both Hikkaduwa and Kotigama had, relatively, large inflows of resources in the course of the 1970s.

At the time of the tsunami, in 2004, the role played by politicians of specific castes in helping local communities to access national resources had been downgraded. This had much to do with the constitution promulgated in 1978 which involved the abolition of the single member constituency, as the unit of representation, and the diminished importance of national politicians in local communities.

The relationship between caste, politics (party political affiliation) and resources, a significant feature of this coastal area had its origin in the system of government instituted by the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931. This was representative government with universal adult franchise. The Donoughmore Constitution instituted a set of constituencies some of which, particularly on the south-western coast, were

¹²⁴ The Town Council (TC) was the local government institution for the region.

heavily dominated by one caste. Sinhapura, like many similar communities on the coast, then had to contend with two new types of personalities: a member of the legislature in whose electorate Sinhapura was located; and, the supporters of this personality, in Sinhapura, who came to be, by virtue of this relationship, political and community leaders. Notions of political support and the political patronage which could be claimed for this support, began to have currency in this as well as in other constituencies, not long after the Donoughmore style of government had been established (Senaratne, 1970).

1947

The Soulbury Constitution of 1947 was the framework within which independence was granted by the United Kingdom, in 1948. Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) became fully independent, as a dominion, within the British Commonwealth. The single member constituency of the Donoughmore Constitution, with the seat as the electoral unit, except in a few multi-member constituencies, was retained under the Soulbury Constitution. In some instances multi-member constituencies were introduced to accommodate ethnic and caste interests, in a non-homogeneous geographical area. In certain parts of the country the final shape of constituencies was influenced by the lobbying of particular castes, to secure constituencies in which there was sufficient representation for these castes. This demand for caste-based constituencies was especially strong on the south-western coast. Thus, the single member constituencies were shaped in such a way that they were, largely, single caste and were represented in parliament by an individual from the same caste. Caste was, therefore, an important aspect of the linkage to national politicians. The MP was the important political figure and the mediator between the electorate and the central government.

The MP was the link through which central government resources flowed into villages like Sinhapura. When a new technology, such as the outboard engines, was promoted by the government, the MP played a critical role in ensuring that Sinhapura received loans for the purchase of engines over and above, perhaps, what should have been its due share. Similarly, the MP's support was sought in securing places in the prominent schools of the region. The hope was that attendance at these schools would enable students to excel at examinations, and secure employment or admission to universities

or entry into the professions. A recommendation from one's MP would often pave the way to gainful employment in government service. Thus, the MP was a critical figure in the access to resources, linked to Sinhapura by the fact that he was a member of the same caste as the people of Sinhapura.

Through the caste association with the local MP, individuals in Sinhapura were able to cultivate contacts with national politicians such as Pieter Keuneman, of the Communist Party, who was the Minister of Housing for the majority of the 1970s. These linkages were important to both sides: for national politicians it related to the political support base at the local level; for local individuals it was contact with an influential person who could be deployed to realise various aspirations. At election time the local supporters had to canvass votes for the candidate and, in general, to play the role of client. In return, they could ask for favours from the local MP, who might, if the request was serious enough, extend his patronage to mobilise the influence of the relevant national politician. People like Gunasena became powerful people in the community, at a comparatively young age, through the political connection with Keuneman. Gunasena told me that he used his connection with Keuneman to get his sons admitted into Devananda College, a prominent school in the town of Ambalangoda to the north of Sinhapura.

In the years after the institution of the Soulbury Constitution, the demands on MPs, throughout the country, escalated. Admission to favoured schools became increasingly difficult and support from the MP was a necessity. With increased demand, opportunities for employment grew scarce. Here, again, recommendation from the MP was useful and even a necessity in the case, sometimes, of government service. Relief for the poor and disbursements to those affected by a disaster were processed more speedily and equitably, if the MP was involved or took an interest. Infrastructure expenditure for, e.g., bridges and roads, would be sanctioned depending, primarily, on the priorities of the MP for the area.

An episode, in the early 1970s, illustrates the way in which a local community, manoeuvring in a caste dominated electorate, was able to move national politicians. Premachandra Mudalali of the Salagama caste, from Kotigama, was eyeing a plot of land in Sinhapura, on the Sinhapura/Kotigama boundary, with a view to purchase. This was opposed by people in Sinhapura who had, by then, emerged as political leaders

owing to their connections with the regional MP who, in turn, had connections to the then Minister of Housing, Pieter Keuneman. The Minister intervened to acquire the land in question for the State, and Premachandra Mudalali's aspirations were thwarted. Eventually, a housing scheme was constructed on the land in question. These houses were given to people, from both within and outside the village, who were in need of housing. This episode illustrates the way in which the local-national linkage was activated, in a time of 'crisis', through the caste connection with the MP. Local leaders, deploying their caste connections, appealed to the MP and, through him, secured the backing of the Minister for their cause. Thus, Sinhapura acquired a community resource -- a housing scheme -- through the working out of caste political affiliations.

1978

The 1978 Constitution brought about radical change in the electoral system. The single member constituency was abolished. Instituted in its stead was the system of Proportional Representation (PR) with the district as the electoral unit, electing 10-12 members to parliament from each district. In the Galle District the voting patterns since 1978 have resulted in the 10 parliamentary seats being distributed between the castes in the following manner: 7 Govigama; 1 Vahumpura; 1 Salagama; and, 1 Karava. One consequence of this was that an MP no longer had a small electorate which he represented in parliament; he, together with his colleagues, became the MP for a whole district. He now stood for a much more diffused and larger electorate. There were no longer small, caste-based electorates which were represented by a person of the same caste. MPs had to seek support from beyond their previous caste-based electorates. While people in communities such as Sinhapura continued to seek the assistance of fellow caste members holding political office, it became necessary for them to seek the patronage of politicians who belonged to other castes.

The post-1978 system of Proportional Representation is weighted in favour of the castes which are in the majority in any region. When a district is taken as a whole, the security which a small, single caste electorate had, in being able to elect a member of its caste, directly, to parliament is no more. With the expansion of the electorate into a whole district, rather than a caste dominated single member constituency, the consequence has been that a large majority of the ten MPs who represent the district are from the majority caste -- in the case of the Galle district the majority, Govigama caste. Thus, it

is the Govigama majority vote which gets the majority of candidates, from the Govigama caste, into parliament, in this region. The implication of this is that minority castes like the Karava and the Durava do not have a caste link to the majority of the MPs of the Galle district. They have lost their capacity to access the resources which they had previously, through the caste MP in the single member constituency. Therefore, they feel marginalised and unrepresented at the national level.

Villages like Sinhapura had, now, a wider circle of political patrons. Those whose caste loyalties had precluded them from supporting political candidates from other castes, now found themselves in a dilemma, since in the wider constituency there were candidates from other castes who might, eventually, be their representatives in parliament. Candidates in the Galle district needed votes from, for example, Sinhapura, if they were to get elected as representatives for the new, expanded electorate. In order to increase their network of political clients, candidates had to be ready to come to the aid of individuals irrespective of caste. Equally, the voter decided that under this system it would be politic to support more than one MP. It was at this point that party loyalties began to supersede caste affiliation. The leading supporters of an MP, in the single member constituency, who had had some influence in the electorate by virtue of their connection with the MP, and who had been the first people to be approached when voters needed some special assistance from the MP, now began to lose some of the importance which they had previously had. My older informants, such as Gunasena, bemoaned the abolition of the old system whereby 'their' MP could be lobbied for a variety of resources and services. They were of the view that the lack of action by the Ministry of Fisheries vis-a-vis the harbour in Sinhapura, from 1995 to 2008, was due to the lack of connection between the community and national politicians and the, consequent, lack of pressure exerted by the community on politicians at the national level. After 1978, in the eyes of the people in small communities such as Sinhapura, the MP came to be seen as a remote and distant personage.

The following episode illustrates the diminished role played by caste in the sphere of political influence, post-1978. In the mid-1980s Sumanasena, of the Karava caste, had a son who had made an application to join the police force. Sumanasena was, at that time, a teacher in a prominent school in Galle and lived on the landside in Sinhapura. In earlier times he would have approached the MP, who represented the caste dominated

constituency to which Sinhapura belonged. In the new circumstances there were several MPs, most of them not from the Karava caste, who could be approached to intercede on behalf of his son. In the event, he chose an MP who was not of the Karava caste, to which Sinhapura belongs, but with whom he had established a political connection with, as it turned out, only partial success. Sumanasena's son was in fact eventually recruited to the police force. Though it may not have been as a result of the non-Karava MP's intervention, what is significant is the fact that Sumanasena felt that he had to seek support outside his own caste affiliation.

In the pre-1978 period (from 1931 to 1978) many constituencies, particularly those of the south-western coast, were dominated by a single caste and a member of this caste was the member of the legislature. He was the patron and the line of patronage operated on caste lines. Thus, the caste politics linkage was a significant avenue through which Sinhapura accessed resources relating to education, employment, trading opportunities and fishing. When this situation changed in 1978 the new, enlarged electorate had both MPs and voters from different castes. MPs saw the advantage of having clients (voters) from other castes. Voters, too, sought patrons other than those from their own castes. As Dilesh Jayantha (1990) asserts patronage on bases other than caste has been, post-1978, the potent force in political allegiance.

1987

In 1987 local government institutions underwent a radical re-structuring, in terms of the 13th Amendment to the 1978 Constitution.¹²⁵ With this amendment Sinhapura and similar communities experienced a further change. A new type of local politician came on the scene to fill the vacuum created by the distancing of the national MP from his small, post-1978, constituency. More power and resources were given to the Provincial Councils (PCs), nine in number, as well as to the other tiers of local government -- the Municipals Councils (MCs), the Urban Councils (UCs), and the Pradeshiya Sabhas (PSs). The representatives to these bodies are elected in a manner similar to that of the

¹²⁵ With this legislation previous local government bodies such as Village Committees (VCs) and Town Councils (TCs) were reconstituted under a new entity, the Pradeshiya Sabha (PS).

national parliament and their operation is on the basis of legislative enactments. The southern Provincial Council comprises the districts of Galle, Matara and Hambanthota.

With the 13th Amendment, the remoteness of the MPs began to be compensated for by the far more accessible local government politicians. Local objectives and aspirations could now be realised through these new arrangements. For example, when a road was required in Sinhapura to connect the Coir Factory with the High Street, it was the local government politicians who constructed this road, drawing on the local government budget for the purpose. Thus, local government rose in importance, in local affairs, and the central role of the national MP was further compromised. Caste linkages with local government politicians began to be activated and caste became, once again, important, this time in local rather than politics.

Broader objectives, however, which required the mobilisation of forces at the national level could not as easily be achieved. Bringing pressure to bear on the national system, on issues such as the harbour in Sinhapura which required action at the national level, remained problematic. Local politicians were not sufficiently powerful, at the national level, and there was no single MP with special responsibility for this community for whom, therefore, lobbying his national colleagues on the matter of the harbour would have been a significant issue. Briefly, the functions performed by the MP, in the single member constituency, of lobbying parliament on behalf of his constituency for changes and for resources that were required, were still not being performed by anyone.

This description of regional caste politics which I have outlined, has some resonance with Subramanian's (2009) account of the interaction between caste and politics in the Kanyakumari district in India. In southern India, during the post-independence period, politics and economic development have emphasised the division between inland and fishing communities. Subramanian writes about the contestation between agrarian castes, such as the Nadars, and coastline castes, such as the Catholic Mukkuvars. Her argument is that due to shifts in the organisation of social power and caste status, the Mukkuvars have a marginalised position vis-a-vis the inland, agrarian castes, which have come to be the politically dominant caste of the region. In Sinhapura, due to the

shifts in electoral arrangements, the Karava caste has become marginalised, in terms of political power, vis-a-vis both the inland Govigama and the coastline Salagama.

This chapter describes the types of resources which were available to Sinhapura, historically, and the ways in which these resources were accessed. Government initiatives in the sphere of technology had had an impact on the role of fisheries in the village economy. Fishing had become more lucrative and this, together with the increase of income from external employment, had led to a larger volume of High Street trade. The other avenue through which resources had become available to this community was through political avenues which were accessed through the caste linkage.

In the next section I draw upon the context described above, in order to analyse the social processes in Sinhapura. The impact of the tsunami on these processes is analysed in Chapters 4,5 and 6.

The Social Processes of Sinhapura

At the time of the tsunami, different types of households were utilising the resources described in the previous section, in different ways, in order to realise their aspirations. They were doing this in terms of their capital, the consequent capacity, and the alliances available to them. It is with the essential features of this process and with the categories of households that result, that I am concerned.

The categorisation of households in Sinhapura which follows, is based on occupation, sources of income, and networks of alliance, i.e., capital and capacity. It is also based on patterns of consumption; behaviour; ideology; lifestyle; and, aspiration.

The Households of Multi-Day Boat Owners

There were fifteen households which were those of the owners of multi-day boats. The multi-day boat was buttressed by other businesses such as fish trading. All of these individuals had advanced to the ownership of the multi-day boat from the ownership of two to three *wallams*. Some had bought their boats, in the early 1990s when the government introduced these craft. They received the boat through the fisheries co-operative, and were among those who had the right political connections. Others raised

the initial capital themselves. When it came to the operation of the boat many found that profitability was an issue. Expenditure was often as high as income. Those who continued to operate the boat were those whose other businesses could 'carry' this one during lean times. The individuals who did not have such businesses to support this venture were struggling, both to repay the finance on the boat and to provide the running costs of fuel and frequent repairs to nets and engines.

The aspiration of the owners of these craft, was to enter the big league of fishing which would place them amongst the 'big' businessmen of the region, bringing with it a particular lifestyle.¹²⁶ This lifestyle involved an imposing residence with furniture and fittings to match. It also involved dining in the restaurants of Hikkaduwa and Galle and travel around Sri Lanka. Many of these multi-day boat owners had connections with local government politicians and even, on occasion, with politicians at the national level. Wijeratne Mudalali, for instance, was a multi-day boat owner who had cultivated connections with politicians both at the local and national level. In the event of the launch of a political career these contacts could be utilised.¹²⁷

The women of these households were not very visible in village life and did not participate in the microfinance societies of Sinhapura. The children were being educated in prominent regional schools. The idea was that this education would lead to lucrative employment. Marriages were planned with suitable families of similar lifestyle. Wijeratne Mudalali had arranged a marriage between his daughter and the son of the owner of a bus, from the landside. He considered this a marriage of equal status, in terms of social position in the village, and expressed great satisfaction with the match. These households were all located on the seaside. Their kinfolk were also their neighbours.

All this is illustrated by the household of Palitha Mudalali. At the time of the tsunami, he lived in a house on the seaside with his wife, his mother-in-law and his eight children, regarded as palatial in village terms. Palitha Mudalali came from a family which had been involved in the fisheries industry for several generations. He had graduated to the ownership of a multi-day boat through the ownership of several

¹²⁶ Before the advent of the multi-day boat the 'big men' of the fishing industry were the owners of the large nets (*madal*).

¹²⁷ One of the important Provincial Councillors of the south had been a multi-day boat owner before his involvement in local government.

wallams. His grandfather had been a *jadi mudalali*. Three of his sons were crew members on his multi-day boat and his *wallams*, while the younger children were attending school in Galle. Though the older children were involved in his fisheries enterprise, Palitha Mudalali was very anxious that the younger ones should be educated and pursue occupations unrelated to fishing.

Palitha Mudalali had connections with local government politicians, with officials of the regional bureaucracy, and with the fisheries industry more generally, i.e., traders and other multi-day boat owners from Hikkaduwa and Galle. Altogether, his extra-village connections were far more important to him than those within the village. For his two older daughters he aspired to marriages with families with a similar level of income, similar lifestyle and similar aspirations for the 'good life'. To this extent, as a family, their interactions with their neighbours, in fact with the community as a whole, was limited. This is illustrated by their attitude to the temple. Involvement in temple activities was minimal, and it was clear that the temple played little role in their aspirations regarding the future.

As a family, this household enjoyed dining out at the restaurants of Hikkaduwa and Kotigama, and regular trips to various parts of the country. Gold was regarded as an investment and worn by his wife and daughters.

Palitha Mudalali told me that he had discouraged his wife from getting involved in any of the microfinance organisations in the village. He stated that this resource was for people in need. Before the tsunami, he had been able to supply his wife and children with all their needs and, therefore, saw no reason for them to get involved in this activity. This household was aspiring to a lifestyle which placed a high degree of emphasis on conspicuous consumption: an imposing residence and a style of consumption which included expenditure on consumer goods, on dining out, and on travel.

The Households of Wallam Owners

The owners of *wallams* had started by purchasing one craft -- often with capital, in part borrowed from kinfolk, or from money lenders or from microfinance organisations. The accrued profit from the first *wallam* would be used to buy a second and then a third, and

so on.¹²⁸ Of these three sources microfinance was, overwhelmingly, the most common source. At this point, there was usually some diversification of investment in terms of purchasing a three wheeler and/or land in the interior. In this group, at the time of the tsunami, there were people at different stages of *wallam* ownership -- one, two, three or more -- with the addition of diversification once a couple of boats had been purchased. Whatever the stage of the trajectory, these households were carrying a heavy debt on the craft, confident that the income from fishing would enable them to repay it without difficulty. Their aspiration was to increase their ownership of *wallams* and then to graduate to the investment in other ventures. Apart from this, the greatest ambition of these *wallam* owners was to educate their children to enable them to secure desirable employment, and to free them from dependence on fishing for their livelihood.

Jayatissa owned three *wallams* and lived on the seaside with his wife, three sons and daughter. He had inherited his house from his father and as his finances improved, had renovated it, making it was one of the nicest ones on the seaside. His kin as well as that of his wife, were their neighbours. He had been a crewman in his youth, and through saving and microfinance loans had bought his *wallams*, one by one. His wife was active in several microfinance societies and this was an important network as far as his household was concerned. Investment in further ventures was their main aspiration and the heavy involvement in microfinance was the pathway to achievement.

Jayatissa and his wife were keen to educate their children and to promote their advancement through this avenue. One of his sons was a certified cricket umpire at the local league level, at the time of the tsunami, and his daughter had just completed her A'level examination. The focus was the advancement of their own household and, as such, the involvement in community activities was minimal. The Jayatissa family participated only in those ritual activities of the temple which they felt were obligatory. Beyond that the temple played a marginal role in their lives. Dining out and trips of leisure to other parts of the country were important to this household.

The Households of Crew Members

There were 254 crew members in Sinhapura at the time of the tsunami.¹²⁹ Some engaged in small businesses as a side line, while others had outrigger canoes from

¹²⁸ 26 individuals owned one *wallam* while 34 *wallams* were owned by those who had two or more.

¹²⁹ This was the figure at the time of the tsunami. Source: survey conducted by the Trust.

which they derived a supplementary income. In one category were the crew members whose wives had some assets, from a dowry, or by way of income, deriving from cinnamon land in the interior, or from some form of employment. Crew members in this category were enabled to save their earnings from crewing towards the purchase of a *wallam*. With the others, there was no surplus and their income was absorbed almost entirely by the daily expenses of the household. The purchase of a *wallam* remained a distant aspiration, as they did not have the capacity to invest the required capital. For crew members as a whole, the education of children was a heavy item of expenditure.

At the lowest level of this occupation were the boys. Aged 15-18, they helped to beach the boats and performed those tasks which are necessary in the preparation of a boat when it puts out to sea.¹³⁰ They hoped to become crewmen through this ‘apprenticeship’. These boys came from the most disadvantaged families of the village. Their education had been cut short unlike in the case of boys from the more established fishing families who, at the time of the tsunami, were being encouraged to aspire to occupations other than fishing.

Bennet was a crew member who had three young sons at the time of the tsunami. He and his family lived on the seaside. He had eloped with his wife when they were both teenagers and, therefore, she brought no dowry to the marriage. She ran a small, home-based business making stringhoppers (a breakfast food made with flour) which she sold to neighbouring households. She told me that with this income she was able to cover the day’s living expenses, in their most basic form, in terms of food and transport. Bennet’s earnings looked after their other expenses, particularly the education of the children. What was left over was put aside towards the purchase of a *wallam*, at some point in the distant future. This saving was in the form of gold jewellery, which was as much insurance as adornment. As Bennet’s wife told me saving towards the *wallam* was difficult as the education of the boy ‘swallowed up’ the money. Bennet’s wife was involved in several microfinance societies and the loans were being used for various consumption purposes, especially the children’s education. The important networks, as far as this household was concerned, were the neighbourhood and the fisheries network. As with the household of Jayatissa, the temple was marginal to their lives.

¹³⁰ Their number was 110 at the time of the tsunami. Source: survey conducted by the Trust.

The Households of the High Street Traders

At the time of the tsunami, there were 57 persons engaged in business on the High Street. It was usual to have two or three ventures running concurrently. Some had either inherited the premises or the business. In the case of others the capital for the ventures had derived from previous employment, from migrant labour in the Middle-East or from small bank loans. In addition to retail businesses, some also provided a service such as an eating house. Many of these individuals were looking to other forms of investment - the purchase of a *wallam* the operation of which was handed over to a skipper and his crew; the purchase of a three wheeler hired out on commission basis to another individual; the purchase of land in the interior in order to build a house, very often as dowries for their daughters. Some of these traders were involved, either openly or covertly, in some level of money-lending.

Apart from this, these households invested in the purchase of a variety of household goods as well as in the purchase of gold, in the form of jewellery. Their domestic rituals, such as marriage, and age-attainment by girls were celebrated on a much grander scale than was the practice with the fishing households. This was their particular form of consumption. Dining out, for instance, was not a form of consumption indulged in by these households. In fact, they denigrated this activity and saw it as an example of the 'reckless spending' of the fishing households.

The celebration of their domestic rituals on this scale involved regular contact with the temple and the temple was at the centre of their lives. By taking part in the ritual activities of the temple their attempt was to demonstrate that their lives were lived according to the tenets of Buddhism. The attempt was to show up and distance themselves from the fishing households whose major economic activity and, on occasion, public behaviour were derided as violating the tenets of Buddhism. To this end pilgrimages were an important activity to places of religious veneration such as Kataragama a shrine dedicated to the God Skanda, located in the deep south.

The High Street traders had external connections with those who facilitated their trading ventures. They found it useful, besides, to maintain some political contacts with, for instance, local government politicians so that these could be called upon to address the difficulties which crop up every now and again in the management of a business.

The aspirations of the High Street traders and their families were founded on notions of respect and propriety. This was enunciated in opposition to the lifestyle of the fishing households. This involved economic advancement in order to provide a satisfactory education for their children such that they could secure commensurate employment and make marriages of equal, or higher status. These households aspired to living in a *vadagath* (respectable) way in the style of *usas thathvaye minissu* (people of high status).

Wijepala Mudalali had four businesses: a bakery on the High Street; the provision of luxury seafood products to the tourist resorts in Hikkaduwa; the wholesale supply of fish to retailers in the Kandy fish market, in the Central Province; and, the sale of dried fish in Sinhapura and the surrounding villages. He told me that he had built up the businesses using a judicious combination of bank loans and microfinance organisations. He also owned four *wallams* bought, as an income generating investment, with the profits from his other businesses. Furthermore, he was lending money to some of his customers, although he did not consider himself a ‘money-lender’ in a formal sense. He did not regard this as a ‘business’ but as a way of helping out his customers when they were in a temporary financial difficulty. This activity, although a sideline, was in fact financially quite lucrative. Wijepala Mudalali had an extensive network through his numerous business activities, in Sinhapura, in the Central Province and in the villages of the area.

Wijepala Mudalali lived on the High Street, in a comparatively luxurious house, with his business premises adjacent it. He had four children, two boys and two girls, who were all schooling except for his eldest daughter. They participated regularly in the ritual activities of the temple and were major donors to the temple. Their connections were with other households on the High Street and, to a lesser extent, those on the landside. The recent ownership of the four *wallams* had, however, meant that some connections with seaside households were in the process of being established. At the time of the tsunami, this household saw itself as advancing steadily forward with a high degree of entrepreneurial activity. Wijepala Mudalali and his wife were very concerned about the children’s education and about their older daughter’s marriage.

The Households of the Service Providers

There were 23 service providers living mainly on the landside with a few dwelling on the High Street. It was usual to have a qualification from a Technical College, followed by an apprenticeship with a senior practitioner. Their levels of income were lower than those of the High Street traders, nor did they have extensive, external, particularly political, contacts. Their business was such that from time to time an expensive item of equipment would have to be purchased. They did not have the capacity to pursue avenues of investment such as the purchase of *wallams*, or three wheelers, or land in the interior. As with the High Street traders, the temple figured prominently in their lives and the education of children was regarded as very important.

Wasantha provided the services of a carpenter to this and other communities of the region. He operated this venture from premises on the High Street, next door to the eating house of his sister, Sushila. His wife's dowry had included some cinnamon land in the interior, which gave this couple a separate income. The property on the High Street had been gifted to him by his father, upon Wasantha's marriage. The ground floor was his workshop while the living quarters were on the storey above. Wasantha had trained in carpentry at a Technical College in Colombo and had apprenticed with a senior carpenter in a township to the interior of Sinhapura. At the time of the tsunami Wasantha had established a reputation as a skilled and reliable carpenter and was investing in better equipment and expanding his business. His links with a wide circle of customers was an important network for this household. Most of the profits were being ploughed back into the business and this household exhibited few signs of conspicuous consumption. Participation in the activities of the temple was important. Wasantha's two sisters and three brothers lived in close proximity, some on the High Street and others on the landside. Thus, the networks which were important for this household were those of the High Street and their kin. To this extent, this household was inward-looking in the sense that their focus was, very much, Sinhapura. The aspiration was to build up the business and live in a *vadagath* manner.

The Households of Persons Externally Employed

Externally employed persons lived, for the most part, on the landside. Those employed in government, 74 in number, were in the armed services; the postal services; the railways; the medical service; the teaching service; and the bureaucracy. There were

104 individuals employed in the private sector -- in the retail trade, in the tourist industry, and in other capacities such as the life-guards. Employment was secured on the basis of varying levels of education. Some also ran a home-based business. In both income and social position there was variety within this group. These were households which had no desire to be involved in the fishing industry, and did not have the capital to start a business. They had succeeded in utilising their education together with such external contacts as were within their reach, to obtain the types of external employment detailed above. The extra-village contacts which resulted from their employment was important for this category in a variety of ways: for instance, in getting children into regional schools. Those in government service felt that this gave them a social position which was respected throughout the country -- a group of elite bureaucrats -- and that, therefore, they were worthy of a special respect in the village. Their aim, much in the way of the High Street traders, was to live in a *vadagath* style. To this end there was a high degree of temple involvement. They placed a great emphasis on the education of their children and for this category the biggest item of household expenditure was education. The microfinance loan was often harnessed to achieve education-related objectives.

Nayana worked as a nurse at the Karapitiya General hospital. Her husband, whose home village was Sinhapura, was attached to the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) as a Technical Officer. They lived on the landside and did not have many kinfolk in the village. The education of their three teenage children was their major concern. Nayana was a member of several microfinance societies and she told me that when she took a loan it was usually to fund some special educational need of her children. Living in a *vadagath* way was important to this household and to this end they were very involved in the affairs of the temple. Because of her nursing skill Nayana was much sought after in her neighbourhood and was, consequently, a person of some importance. My research assistant's father had been a patient in the Karapitiya Heart Unit where Nayana was employed. As my research assistant told me, Nayana had been very helpful easing the traumatic experience for them in many ways. The networks which were important to this household were the neighbourhood and the external network resulting from employment. This was a household which was strongly pursuing education as the pathway to advancement, anchored to the temple and the norms and behaviour concomitant to it.

The Female-Headed Households

There were female-headed households, where the husband as the main breadwinner was no longer in the picture, on the seaside as well as the landside. They were few in number. The woman would be found running a small business from home or doing a cottage craft, such as the weaving of coir mats, so that she could take care of the children and do the household chores while earning an income. It was most often some tragic occurrence which had led to the loss of the male breadwinner. The women were anxious to maintain their independence and not become dependent on kin or neighbours. They had, however, to work very hard just to make ends meet. Their aspiration was to overcome the tragedy and to live in as *vadagath* a way as possible. These women saw education as the pathway out of their difficult circumstances, and provided all the encouragement that they could to their children. Much of their social contact with the community was through the temple. These households did not have the wherewithal for the repayment of loans and their involvement in the microfinance societies was, therefore, minimal. Nor did they have strong alliances which could be mobilised in times of crisis.

Hiranthi had eloped at a very young age and lived with her husband and his family on the seaside. Her own family who were located on the High Street and the landside, had opposed the relationship because the young man was from a fishing household, and upon the elopement had cut off all connections with the young couple. Within three years of the marriage, however, Hiranthi's husband was dead, the victim tragically of an incident of gang warfare in the area. Although a small house had been built for the young couple by her husband's parents on their property, Hiranthi was left with an infant son with no visible means of support. Hiranthi started a grocery in her house with her husband's grandmother residing with her to provide both company and help with the business. At the time of the tsunami, the business was a fledgling one although it was providing her with the day's expenses. Her main aspiration, at this stage, was to secure her financial independence and, through this, the education of her child. Participation in community activities was in no way a priority for Hiranthi. All her efforts were directed towards the business and the upbringing of her son. Hiranthi had been a bright student who had shone in her studies while at school. She had eloped just before her O'level examination and, as she told me, now regretted her lost opportunities.

There were a few households of senior citizens supported by a daughter, either through external employment or through a home-based business. The parents sometimes had a small pension from minor government service. The daughter provided financial support and also played the role of carer. It was often the case that though there were other children, they did not share the responsibility for their parents, financially or otherwise. In fact, for the most part, they did not live in the village. The household aspiration was to live in as *vadagath* a way as the circumstances would allow, maintaining the good health of the elderly parents, and with the hope that a suitable marriage for the daughter would materialise.

The Households of the Unavasara Dwellers

The 18 *unavasara* households were the beach dwellers who lived near the boundary of the village with Kotigama. They were people from outside the village who had, eighteen years prior to the tsunami, come to the beach as squatters. They were permitted to continue through the intervention of a local government politician, on the understanding that this was a temporary measure and they would be given land and a house in the interior. This had not come to pass and they continued to live in Sinhapura where they were regarded with suspicion and, sometimes, outright, hostility. With little education and few skills they were eking out a precarious existence, living in houses which were little more than shacks. Casual work, which did not require any great skill, is what was available to them in Sinhapura and the surrounding villages. A few were crewmen.

The *unavasara* neither had capital, of a financial nature, nor a special skill with which to lift themselves out of their circumstances. They felt that they were unwelcome in Sinhapura and that they were living on the beach on sufferance. Their main aspiration was to reside in a community where they were respected and welcome.

Ranjanie lived with her family in a shack amongst the *unavasara* dwellings. Her husband was an itinerant fish trader and casual labourer and her son got work, on and off, as a temporary crewman. She was not very forthcoming about their antecedents. What she did tell me was that they had come to Sinhapura and squatted on the beach because it was rumoured that this was the way to get a house from the government. As a seamstress Ranjanie had developed a trade in the production of bedsheets. Her son had married a girl from another *unavasara* household, in much the same circumstances as

their own, and lived with Ranjanie and her husband. Their main contacts were with the other *unavasara* households. They felt unwelcome at the temple and had little participation in its rituals, ceremonies and activities. For example, they were not assigned duties for providing meals to the temple. The focus of their aspirations was the acquisition of a permanent residence in a settled community where they had rights and respect, and where they could earn a living in an acceptable manner.

Households with Special Features

There were some households in Sinhapura which, though falling into one of the eight categories described above, exhibited features which marked them off from other households in their category.

There were the households where the husband and the wife contributed more or less equally to household income. In the case of the wife, this income was usually from external employment or from a lucrative cottage craft such as the weaving of coir mats. The women felt that one income was not sufficient to take the family in the direction that they wanted it to go and, furthermore, that the men lacked the energy, the enthusiasm and the drive to propel the household into a new level, in terms of lifestyle. The women were very active in steering the family in the 'right' direction, in terms of living in a *vadagath* style. Where the household had daughters, the aspirations centred upon a suitable marriage. The ability to purchase household goods and gold jewellery was important in this context. In addition, an educated girl with income-earning potential had enhanced prospects for marriage. These households were found on the seaside as well as on the landside. These families were among the lower income groups in the village. The energetic and proactive role of the woman in these households, was in marked contrast with the role played by the woman in the affluent fishing households or those of the High Street. There, the man would be making good money from fishing or from trade, while it was the part of the woman to confine herself to the domestic sphere with little say in the decision-making, oriented towards the future of the household.

In Sinhapura it was men who sought overseas employment. With little education but with a skill such as driving or a training such as that for life-guards they went abroad to countries in the Middle-East, to Cyprus or to South Korea for periods of 2-3 years. With their earnings these young men supported the household back home. Connection with

someone who had influence with an employment agency, who could get them the job in the overseas country without the payment of heavy premiums, was essential. Their earnings, often as much as six or seven times the remuneration for comparable employment in Sri Lanka, was the factor which motivated them to endure a harsh climate and work environment; very basic and crowded living quarters; unfamiliar food and the isolation from kinfolk and the warmth of extended family life. These young men were from households which, in village terms, were far from affluent. The immediate need was to support the family in Sri Lanka with their remittances. Their aspirations centred on the family: to buy land and build a house; to start a business; to give their sisters in marriage with a dowry; to get married themselves on a secure economic basis; to support the education of younger siblings; and, to support elderly parents.

In many of the categories mentioned above, there were women who were active in one or more microfinance societies. Though it was the woman who secured the loan it became part of the capital of the household. This capital was used to buy a *wallam*, an engine or nets, or to start or expand a business. It was also used for a variety of other purposes: to buy land in the interior; to finance the purchase of a three wheeler; to fund an educational purpose; to pursue a craft venture; to finance the expenses of a marriage ritual. Thus, at the time of the tsunami, the microfinance loan had come to be a source of credit for many people, in pursuing their different aspirations. Shirani, for instance, was a member of all seven microfinance organisations operating in the village at the time. At any given time, she had loans from several organisations which were then used for money-lending purposes and also to fund a *seettu*. While making this money 'work' for her she would use it to repay loans as they arose.

It will be clear from the account presented above that the productive activity and the nature of the patterns of consumption of this community were directed towards the advance of the individual household: securing the material wealth of the household; educating children and establishing them in suitable occupations; arranging marriages. This is related to the fact that community feeling in Sinhapura, at the time of the tsunami, had been eroded by its diminution as a centre of importance. There were few

institutions which drew people together as a community -- activities were oriented towards an economic purpose, and involved clusters of households. Therefore, there was little scope for community leadership. As the leaders of one generation passed away new ones had not emerged to fill their place. There was little for leaders to take up as a cause which would have united people and given them the feeling that community advancement was as important as personal advancement.

This can be contrasted with neighbouring Kotigama, for instance, where the school was an important community focus and drew the support of those living in Kotigama, as well as those of the Salagama caste who had migrated out of Kotigama and advanced in the world.

For the landside, living their lives in a *vadagath* way was very important and this lifestyle was epitomised by involvement in the activities of the temple, the pursuit of education, white collar (non-manual) employment and decorous behaviour. For this side of the village, the normative base of this lifestyle was located in the temple. In all their domestic rituals, such as age-attainment and marriage, the temple was accorded a significant place. This can be contrasted with the seaside. Here, the conspicuous forms of consumption that were considered important, lay in activities such as dining out and going on trips of leisure. A central component of the *vadagath* lifestyle, on the landside, was decorous behaviour. Behaving in a *vadagath* manner was considered very important and was a way in which these households differentiated themselves from the seaside -- a marker of identity. A respectable, although not ostentatious, house, consumer goods, and discreet gold jewellery were all elements of this lifestyle. Marriage with families of equal or better social position, preferably from other villages, was important both in terms of the advance of the family and the alliances that this would create. The community was conscious of these distinctions and communicated them to me as an observer.

On the landside, different types of people aspired to the *vadagath* lifestyle in different ways. The resources, or capital in Bourdieu's terms, which were valued in this cultural context were accumulated in order to enhance capacity and social position (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996). It was the capacity to consume these resources which shaped and

defined aspiration, and which gave each household its *vadagath* orientation. The account above illustrates that this was an active process. Some households used their accumulated capital to accumulate more capital as, for instance, the investment in further entrepreneurial activities by High Street traders. Others, such as those externally employed, used their capital to educate their children; the returns here were obviously long-term. Yet others, spent their capital on consumer goods. Here the return was an immediate and visible improvement of social position; however, the capital was no longer available to accumulate further capital. Thus, it becomes clear that individuals and households were consuming resources, changing position in the social field and advancing in the social order, in their chosen ways.

The lifestyle and behaviour of the fishing households was not regarded by those on the landside as being a *vadagath* one -- a point often communicated to me. The taking of life in any form is against *ahimsa*, one of the cardinal tenets of Buddhism, and the income derived from an activity such as fishing was seen as 'tainted'.¹³¹ The fishermen contested the assertion that their lifestyle was a non-*vadagath* one, on two bases, the pragmatic and the material. One of these was the amassing of material objects for the good life, rather than the display of piety and devotion by constant attendance at the temple. The other was the independence that the lucrative occupation of fishing gave the seaside. By virtue of their high incomes these households were less dependent than the landside, on government institutions and political connections for progress and achievement in their lives. In their assessment of social position, it was the advantage they possessed in terms of material wealth, and what could be done with this in terms of the accumulation of consumer goods, dining out and travel, that was stressed by the seaside. Furthermore, the dependence of the landside on the hierarchies of government service and corporate entities, was emphasised. While it was on the basis of their occupation, wealth and lifestyle that the fishing households asserted their superiority, it was, nevertheless, an object with them that their children should be educated enough to engage in occupations other than fishing and to hold their own in terms of the normative framework of the landside.

¹³¹ *Ahimsa* refers to the concept in Buddhist thought of respect towards all living things, and the avoidance of violence towards others, both in thought and in deed. Source: The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th Edition, 1995.

The landside and the seaside were dealing with two distinctly different sets of resources, had different aspirations and two distinct ideologies as illustrated by the account above. The fishing households stressed material wealth and the style of consumption that this wealth enabled. Opposed to this was the ideological framework of the landside, which purported to uphold the non-material side of life, based on a proper observance in daily life of the tenets of Buddhism. The competition between these two ideologies was displayed in everyday activities such as the organisation and conduct of the households; the participation in temple activities of the landside; in the leisure activities of the seaside. Neither ideology being dominant, gave the community an egalitarian aspect, since neither the landside nor the seaside was able, in fact, to vindicate their respective claims to social superiority.

The conflict arising from the tension between the landside and the seaside was held in check by the fact that both sides were well aware that any full-blown conflict within Sinhapura could be exploited by Kotigama and Hikkaduwa. Thus, Sinhapura was held together by its reality as a political unit, in relation to the other units of this region. Caste was, of course, a significant factor in this identity. It is, therefore, as people of Sinhapura rather than as those of a fishing community, that they encountered others from the communities of the region and, for instance, competed for the access to government resources and institutions.

The tension between the two sides of the village, in Sinhapura, resonates with Stirrat's (1988) account of Ambakandawila, where he states that the arguments between the social groupings in the village (*kattiyas*) were arguments over relative status and that these were worked out in contexts such as the church, fishing societies and local government politics.

Clearly, therefore, different categories of people in this community were exploiting different resources, oriented towards productive activities to increase their capital, with the concomitant enhancement of their capacities, with the intention of improving their social position and better pursuing their aspirations. A variety of connections and alliances were used by individuals and households in furthering their exploitation of resources: the alliances of neighbourhood and kin; business and trade connections; caste

and politics; networks of government service, fisheries and tourism. While the two sides of the village placed the aspirational emphasis on different things -- one side placed the emphasis on what they designated the *vadagath* lifestyle, while the other side placed the emphasis elsewhere -- as far as both sides were concerned, it is the behaviour of different types of people, the resources that they exploited and the aspirations that they pursued, in terms of their capacities, which came to constitute what I refer to as the social processes of Sinhapura.

The Impact of the Tsunami on the households of Sinhapura

On 26 December 2004 many of the multi-day boats were not out at sea since it was a *poya* (full moon) day. They were berthed in the harbours of Hikkaduwa and Galle where they suffered heavy damage.¹³² As the rich men of the community, the multi-day boat owners found themselves left with drastically reduced incomes almost overnight. Their enterprises were ones which depended on the generation of high incomes to service the heavy loans which these boats carried. It was a great blow when the capacity to generate such incomes was lost. *Wallam* owners, though the scale was much less, suffered losses of capital; drastic reduction in income; and the consequent inability to repay their loans. Crew members, too, lost their income and savings.

The traders and service providers on the High Street had their businesses severely disrupted. They lost capital and income and the capacity to restock their stores. Their enterprises too carried a heavy load of debt and the repayment of loans now became a problem which reduced them to despair.

With those engaged in external employment the picture was a varied one. Living for the most part on the landside, their dwellings and property were largely undamaged and, by and large, they continued to receive their earnings from employment. There were those, however, who were working in the tourist industry who suffered loss of income so that day to day living became problematic.

The *unavasara* lost their homes and all their belongings as the flimsy shacks in which they lived, on the beach, were washed away by the tsunami waves. The demand for their labour ceased abruptly: in the wake of the disaster the residents of Sinhapura did not

¹³² Fishermen in Sri Lanka avoid going to sea on a *poya* (full moon) day because the belief is that on this day the catch will be poor. The full moon day, in Sri Lanka, is a day of Buddhist religious observance.

require the services of gardening, cleaning, coconut plucking, and the digging of coir retting pits. The *unavasara* were rendered homeless and had to take refuge in the temple.

Compared to the simpler economies of neighbouring communities the economy of Sinhapura was, at the time of the tsunami, a diverse and growing one. In these terms, the losses of capital were large. When the first shock of the disaster had passed people had to come to terms with reality. Individuals had very little liquid cash; the owners of boats and traders had borrowed up to the limit of their repaying capacity; people on fixed incomes had little in savings given the heavy expenditure incurred by them on the education of their children. Even those unaffected by the disaster were unable to help those who were the immediate victims.

Once the problems of living expenses and shelter had been, temporarily, solved the problem of debt repayment loomed large. The tsunami had struck, in the case of many, at a particular point in the borrowing cycle. Loans had been taken and were being paid back through the high earnings that were possible at the height of the fishing season. Despite the loss of capital and of income, the loans had to be repaid if people were not to face dire consequences under the law.

The disaster was on such a scale, affecting coastal communities over a large swathe of the country, that the networks which the inhabitants of Sinhapura might otherwise have invoked could not in these circumstances come to their aid.

What happened, then, after the tsunami in a community where the temple had a central importance in people's lives where there was a heavy stress on the accumulation of capital; where the education of children was a paramount concern; where community activity was limited; and where the old-style community leaders were not to be found?

The impact of the tsunami on Sinhapura is the focus of the chapters which follow: in Chapter 4, I describe the forms of state assistance and how those affected by the tsunami responded; in Chapter 5, I look at the initiatives of NGOs and responses at the community level; in Chapter 6, I attempt to identify the ways in which strategising by individuals and households was oriented towards recovery.

Chapter 4 -- The State Programmes

Introduction

In the previous chapter I set out what I have identified as the social processes of Sinhapura. The way in which resources were utilised in the pursuit of aspirations and the tension between the competing ideologies and the lifestyles of the seaside and the landside, encapsulated the social processes of Sinhapura at the time of the tsunami. I also demonstrated the fact that the interaction between caste and politics, in the region in which Sinhapura is located, was important in the constitution of the social processes of this community and the sense in which Sinhapura had come to be a political, social and economic reality.

In this chapter, my focus is the impact of the state programmes of relief and reconstruction, consequent upon the tsunami, on these social processes.

At the time of the tsunami, Sinhapura's relationship with the state had evolved as a result of various historical events. These events integrated the norms of the state with the culture of the community (Althusser, 2006; Gramsci, 2006) and a relationship was established within which day to day business could be transacted. The state had been visible in Sinhapura from colonial times, in the early decades of the 20th Century, when there was an Excise Office located in the village. Subsequently, there was the Town Council (TC) and the police -- one, an institution of central government, and the other, one of local government. With the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931, it was the Member of the State Council who intervened on behalf of the community, to obtain better services from the state in return for their vote. In communities such as Sinhapura a sense of entitlement, vis-à-vis the rights in relation to the state, came into being. As discussed in the previous chapter, caste was an important feature of this process because the electorate, the village (Sinhapura), and the Member of the State Council were all of one caste.

Over the years, therefore, the citizens of Sinhapura had developed a multi-faceted relationship with the state. This included treating the services provided by the state, at the central, regional and local level, as a pool of resources to be exploited in pursuing their aspirations (Fuller & Harriss, 2001). This is in accord with Spencer's comment:

“For the villagers in Sri Lanka I worked with in the 1980s, the state was generally perceived as a source of resources (jobs, healthcare, land, contracts), a source of social capital (the prestige that follows either possession of a job, or exploitation of a privileged link to local politicians or officials), a source of oppression (the venal activities of the police), an arena for disputes (the courts, selective appeal to the police), and a screen on to which villagers could project their visions of their own future.” (Spencer:2007:141)

The state was not perceived at the community level, therefore, as inaccessible or as a top-down entity (Das & Poole, 2004; Gupta & Sharma, 2006).

Sinhapura had long since recognised and experienced the political modernity of the state -- its impact on the community through everyday practices and representations (Gupta & Sharma, 2006). In everyday terms, there were the regional and local institutions of the central government as well as local government; the police; the courts; and, the services of health, transport and education. Caste allegiance and patronage was intertwined with the exploitation of these resources. These institutions were infused with much in the way of local culture, at times violating some of the principles on which the institutions were expected to operate. For instance, the police played a part in the resolution of domestic quarrels and civil disputes though this was outside their scope of activity.

There is the constant shifting and blurring of the boundaries between the state and society -- for example, when the representatives of the state (bureaucrats) are also members of society and the distinctions between public concerns and private ones blur (Gupta, 1995; Gupta, 2012). In Sinhapura while these distinctions did, on occasion, become hazy because of the issues of patronage and caste, there were the boundaries of territory, defence and administration which were perceived as constituting the state (Fuller & Harriss, 2001). The state's boundaries were being constantly emphasised and remade through Sinhapura's interaction with the various representatives and institutions of the state.

With the abolition of single member constituencies after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1978, the links between national level politicians and communities such as Sinhapura within the wider, district-level, multi-member electoral constituencies, had become tenuous. Furthermore, the shift of the Town Council and the police from Sinhapura to Hikkaduwa had taken place in the 1970s. As a result of these events, at the

time of the tsunami, Sinhapura had few leaders with connections to the state apparatus.¹³³

Unlike some of the smaller villages of the region, however, which were seen as marginal communities because of poverty, distance, insignificance and a limited contribution to the life of the region, Sinhapura was not regarded in this way because of the fact that some remnants of its days of importance remained.

Due to the lack of contact between Sinhapura and the state apparatus, Members of Parliament (MPs) did not feel that they had an interest in involving themselves, to any great extent, in the programmes for the relief and regeneration of disaster-affected communities such as Sinhapura. Accordingly, on the south-western coast, they concentrated their efforts on relief programmes oriented towards the large constituencies of Galle, Matara and Hambanthota, into which two or more of the old single member constituencies had been amalgamated. In this context, it was as a community of the Karava caste, a community which felt itself to be in a vulnerable position when compared with the neighbouring village of Kotigama (a community of the Salagama caste), and with Hikkaduwa, a multi-caste community, economically diverse and by then established as an important seaside resort in the tourist industry, that Sinhapura interacted with the state institutions in the aftermath of the tsunami. The perception was that, as a community, it would have to fight hard if it was to receive its fair share of resources from the state.

The state programmes to restore disaster-affected communities were directed at the compensation of the losses of individual households; the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure; and the resuscitation of the affected industries of tourism and fisheries. In its programmes to rehabilitate the households of tsunami-affected communities, the state adopted a policy of uniform prescriptions with regard to immediate relief. Differences between communities, as well as within them, in terms of wealth, income, occupation, demographic patterns, caste composition and political affiliation were not incorporated into the design of programmes. These programmes did not take into account the diversity of communities around the country, in these terms, and their specific needs. Furthermore, within communities there was no mechanism to identify the particular needs of a household and to design a relief package which was suited to

¹³³ Please refer Chapter 3 for the growth and the decline of the importance of Sinhapura over the years.

these needs. The imperative behind the design of programmes was to deliver relief speedily, visibly and equitably in the face of pressure from disaster-affected populations, the media and civil society, in a manner that could be handled by local level officials such as the Grama Niladhari.¹³⁴

Narratives about entitlement -- the moral discourses surrounding loss and compensation -- legitimacy and accountability were central to the way in which Sinhapura responded to the state programmes, and the history of the interaction between the state and Sinhapura was the context for the generation of these narratives.

It is in terms of this background that the implications of state aid to Sinhapura has to be seen. In what way did the resources which flowed into this community, through the state programmes in the aftermath of the tsunami, shape the interaction between the two sides of the village and the social processes of Sinhapura? What happened to the social position of the categories of individuals and households detailed in the previous chapter?

Before responding to this question another point has to be noted. Due to structural tensions between the central government and local government bodies, since the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka in 1987, the latter found themselves marginalised when it came to the disbursement of relief provided by the state. Therefore, local government politicians had no access to central government funds in order to provide relief to their political clients. Deprived of state funds, they had to depend on private agencies to sponsor those efforts which they felt compelled to initiate as local level politicians, particularly in view of the local government elections in 2006. Exacerbating this situation was the fact that at the time of the tsunami some of the tiers of local government -- the Provincial Councils (PC), the Municipal Councils (MC), the Urban Councils (UC) and the Pradeshiya Sabhas (PS) -- were dominated by parties politically opposed to the party in power in central government. The Southern Provincial Council, for instance, was controlled by the party in central government, the People's Alliance (PA), while it was the United National Party (UNP), the main opposition party, which dominated the Hikkaduwa Urban Council.¹³⁵ Local politicians

¹³⁴ Please refer Chapter 1 for a description of the hierarchies of the central administration and the various institutions involved in the state disbursement of aid.

¹³⁵ Source: Personal communication with an official of the Galle District Secretariat; officials of the Hikkaduwa UC; a Special Advisor to the President; a previous Member of Parliament.

were, thus, deprived of their role as intermediaries between the state and the community.

The State Programmes

The Buffer Zone

One of the first steps taken by the state in response to the tsunami was the extension of the boundary of the buffer zone, imposed upon construction on the south-western coastline, from 35 metres to a 100 metres.¹³⁶ The purpose was the protection of the community in the event of another tsunami.

The 35 m reservation had been fixed on the recommendation of the Coast Conservation Department (CCD). The task of the CCD is to do a survey of the coastal belt, every four years, and on the basis of the scientific evidence of this investigation to change the limits of the buffer zone depending on existing economic activities, biodiversity, existing laws and the viability of implementation.¹³⁷

The decision to extend the buffer zone in the context of the disaster had several implications. Building was not permitted within this extended zone, while repairs to existing structures could only be undertaken with due permission. The government's policy, enunciated at the time, was to rehouse all those who lived within this newly demarcated zone in the new tsunami resettlements.

It was not clear whether the boundary for the buffer zone was the vegetation line or the high water line. Furthermore, there was uncertainty regarding residence, in proximity to the beach and fears about the depreciation of land values -- land was important as collateral in loan transactions. As Hyndman puts it: "These setback areas, where home reconstruction was prohibited along the affected coastlines, vividly illustrate how a policy to enhance public safety at a national level stirred, instead, nationalist feelings of discrimination, tension, and fear." (Hyndman:2011:42).

This new restriction was also challenged for being implemented with double standards. Tourist resorts were able to obtain planning permission, for reconstruction within this restricted area, from the Urban Development Authority (UDA), the CCD, and the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB). The Coral Sands Hotel in Hikkaduwa, for instance, was

¹³⁶ The buffer zone for the eastern coast of Sri Lanka was extended to 200 metres.

¹³⁷ Source: Personal communication with Mr. Hewage, CCD, 20 August, 2008.

rebuilt where it had stood previously, virtually on the beach.¹³⁸ Ordinary citizens, however, could not get their construction plans passed, especially by the CCD.

Fishing households, in Sinhapura, reacted with dismay to the potential move to the interior of the country. The rhythm of their lifestyle, particularly the fact that their boats and engines are berthed on the beach, required that they live by the sea. Although they felt entitled to compensation from the state, they saw the move to the interior as completely disruptive of their lifestyle. It was the government statement that these households would acquire the unfettered ownership of a new house and its appurtenant land, while retaining their rights to the damaged property on the seaside, which reconciled them to the shift. Thus, this began to be seen as a legitimate compensation for the cataclysm which had struck their lives.

At the time of the tsunami the *unavasara*, with their dwelling within the 35m zone, were viewed by the rest of Sinhapura as illegal residents on the beach. As a result, the perception was that they were not entitled to any compensation, even if their houses were totally destroyed. Many people, including Palitha Mudalali and Jayatissa told me that this was a very unjust situation. People without any rights in Sinhapura such as the *unavasara* dwellers were getting very much more than they lost -- freehold land and a new house in a new community -- while the boat owners, for instance, were only being compensated for a fraction of what they had lost.

The approach of the Sri Lankan government can be contrasted with that of the state government in Gujarat, consequent upon the earthquake of 2001. As Simpson puts it: "By the middle of 2001, the Government of Gujarat implemented legislation for the creation of Area Development Authorities (ADAs). In essence, this provided the government with the legal right to alienate the people from what they considered inalienable, their property." (Simpson:2005:229). In Sri Lanka there was no wholesale takeover of land, as in Gujarat under a special authority, for development under a government plan.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Source: Personal communication with the Manager and a Director of the Board of the Coral Sands Hotel, Hikkaduwa, in June 2005.

¹³⁹ In April 2006 the 100m rule was rescinded and the 35m reinstated as the boundary.

Immediate Relief

Three weeks after the tsunami the government issued Tsunami Cards to all tsunami-affected households. This entitled each household to food stamps and a cash allowance. The sum per person, per week was Rs. 375/-.¹⁴⁰ The criterion for receiving this benefit was very broad and it was a programme which was operative for a year. The issuing authority was the Samurdhi Bank for the cash, and the co-operative stores, for the food items -- rice, flour, dhal, sugar, salt and coconut oil. These households were also entitled to a one off sum of Rs. 2000/- for the purchase of kitchen utensils.

This sum was obtained from the People's Bank, in Hikkaduwa, and the Ruhuna Development Bank in Batapola, in the interior.¹⁴¹ In the case of the loss of a family member the state compensation was Rs. 15,000/-.

In order to be eligible for any of the state benefits, each household had to be certified as having suffered damage by the governmental official of the area, the Grama Niladhari (GN), as well as the Technical Officer (TO) of the Divisional Secretariat. A report from the local police was also a requirement.¹⁴² Thus, the GN and the TO played a significant role in the decision-making surrounding compensation.

Soon after the Tsunami Card began to be disbursed there were allegations from the majority of those affected by the tsunami, living on the seaside, that those who had no legitimate right to a Tsunami Card were recipients. Rajith, a crew member, and his friends told me that Hemasiri, living on the landside, employed in the retail sector external to the village, received this benefit when he was in no way entitled to it. The GN's defence was that when he tried to limit the issue of Tsunami Cards to those who were rightfully entitled to it, at his office in the village, he was met with aggression and the threat of assault. He stated that in this context, he had no option but to yield to the pressure of the collective. Another GN, from a nearby community, confirmed this view that limiting the distribution of Tsunami Cards only to those who were eligible, was not possible at this time. The result was that the Tsunami Card was issued to 95% of the

¹⁴⁰ The Rs. 375/- comprised Rs. 200/- worth of dry goods and Rs. 175/- cash. At the time of the tsunami the exchange rate was approximately US \$ 1 = SL Rs. 100/-

¹⁴¹ The People's Bank and the Bank of Ceylon are the two government banks in Sri Lanka.

¹⁴² Two weeks after the tsunami the GN and the TO inspected properties and assessed the levels of damage.

households of Sinhapura. The perception on the landside of the community was that this benefit from the state was not merely for those affected by the disaster, but an entitlement for all legitimate citizens, at a time of national difficulty. Those most affected by the tsunami, on the seaside, opposed this view vehemently.

In addition to the Tsunami Card there was the state benefit of Rs. 20,000/-. All households affected by the disaster, those whose main source of income had been disrupted, and those deriving their income from the fishing industry were eligible for this benefit. This sum was given in four tranches of Rs. 5000/- each, and the first one was disbursed in March 2005. Although this benefit did not reach as many as the Tsunami Card, a broad spectrum of Sinhapura society received the first two instalments. After the second instalment there was concern about the legitimacy of recipients, in particular the fact that some people had obtained this sum from two separate GN divisions as a result of being registered as residents in two different communities. There was the allegation that the GN encouraged claims by those not genuinely affected by the disaster and favoured those with whom he had a personal connection, thereby, depriving legitimate recipients.¹⁴³ One of my informants told me that Nandapala who was not a fisherman, whose house near the boundary with Kotigama was not damaged, who was, however, of the Salagama caste as was the GN, received all four tranches of this benefit.¹⁴⁴ He was convinced that this was because of caste solidarity.¹⁴⁵ Bennet, who was a crew member, who had lost his mode of income and was entitled to the Rs. 20,000/- compensation, did not receive it because, as he told me, the GN claimed that the state was out of funds by the time it was his 'turn'. He felt that the GN had given this benefit to those not entitled to it, and had finished the 'quota' for Sinhapura. He was vocal about his situation and, like many others, gave plenty of publicity to the injustice that he had suffered.

By the time of the third instalment, the policy had concretised into one where those eligible were fishing households and those who had lost their mode of income. Thus, government employees, even if their houses and household goods were affected, did not

¹⁴³ When I refer to those with whom the GN had a personal connection I refer to those who were his patrons as well as his clients.

¹⁴⁴ . There were a few families living on the boundary with Kotigama, who were of the Salagama caste who fell within the administrative division of Sinhapura, although most of their connections were with Kotigama.

¹⁴⁵ The GN for Sinhapura was from Kotigama. He lived in Kotigama and was of the Salagama caste.

receive the third and fourth tranches. Charlotte, a teacher at one of the schools in Sinhapura, only obtained the first two tranches of this benefit. She did not receive the rest, although her house and household goods were substantially damaged. Her house was on the landside, immediately to the interior of the High street. As a teacher she was a government servant who continued to receive a salary and, therefore, her household had an income.

The consequence of all this was that there was a feeling of uncertainty and confusion about the criteria applicable in the disbursement of this programme of relief. The second, third and fourth instalments were disbursed in May, July and September 2005.¹⁴⁶

Many households utilised the Tsunami Card to fund their living expenses, and the Rs. 20,000/- benefit for other urgent needs such as the repair of boats and the repayment of loans. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many households in this community carried a burden of debt. The main concern, in the wake of the tsunami, was the repayment of these loans -- on a *wallam*; a three wheeler; a piece of equipment for a business. Jayatissa, a *wallam* owner, told me that if he had not used this compensation to repay the microfinance loan taken by his wife, to fund his latest *wallam*, she would have been facing severe interest on this loan and even court action, eventually. As far as he was concerned, there was no moral dilemma. He was entitled to this compensation, and having obtained it, what he did with it was his business.

The majority of the community did not see it like this. What people did with the compensation which they received was a matter of community concern, because this revealed whether they had a moral right to it in the first place. If a household was *really* in need they would use this sum for essential, day to day, living expenses. If, instead, they used it for repaying loans or other consumption purposes such as buying a television set then, clearly, they were *not* in real need and, therefore, not morally eligible for this compensation. There were many lively debates on the verandah of the Trust premises, in Sinhapura, during the period that this benefit was being disbursed, regarding this issue -- namely, the purposes for which this compensation should be utilised.

¹⁴⁶ According to the Divisional Secretariat in Hikkaduwa 347 households in Sinhapura received this benefit.

The government's relief programme of the Tsunami Card and the Rs. 20,000/- was viewed by different categories of people in different ways. For crew members this was essential relief in a situation where their income had ceased. Those who were employed outside the village did not have a uniform reaction. On the one hand, those who were employed in the private sector and whose workplace was either a tourist hotel or a business premises which was destroyed were, like the crewmen, grateful to receive the benefits. On the other hand, those who worked for the government did not receive all of these benefits because they continued to draw their salaries even if their place of work was destroyed. High Street traders and service providers found the benefits useful; however, they were disenchanted with the state because the losses of livelihood that they incurred were not addressed. For the *wallam* owners and the multi-day boat owners these benefits were not of great significance, given their previous income and the expenses of their lifestyle. What they regarded as legitimate compensation was a boat for the boat that they had lost, or a house, of a commensurate dimension, for the one that was destroyed. For the *unavasara*, these benefits were the sort of steady income which they had never experienced before.

Temporary Housing

Those who had taken refuge in the temple and in the school, due to damage to their houses, were in urgent need of temporary accommodation. This took the form, in the first week of January 2005, of tents pitched on land belonging to the temple and in the playgrounds of the two schools.

After a few weeks temporary structures to provide accommodation were constructed on three plots of bare land in the village -- a plot of land at the main junction in Sinhapura, adjacent to the High Street; land belonging to the temple; the playground of one of the schools. The temporary houses, made of wood or reinforced asbestos, were constructed by an NGO and by a political party, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

People lived in these structures for some months, from May 2005, until they moved to the permanent housing outside the village. These temporary shelters were dismantled between June and December 2006.

The state's role in the construction of temporary housing was limited to one of facilitation between the community and the organisations willing to construct them. The

state focus was on permanent housing. In the case of Sinhapura, the NGO and the JVP came to the village and made the offer to construct temporary accommodation, through their contacts. Suitable land was identified. It was when construction was imminent, that the GN and the Divisional Secretariat in Hikkaduwa were informed. Thus, relief organisations and local communities settled the matter of temporary accommodation, with little state involvement.

Repair to Damaged Housing

Those whose houses were totally destroyed within the 100m zone were entitled to a house in the new settlements. Those whose houses were outside this zone, were entitled to Rs. 250,000/- to rebuild them.

Once the 35m buffer zone had been reinstated, in April 2006, those whose houses were between 35m and a 100m were given the option of a house in a new community or Rs. 250,000/- to rebuild their house. Most took the option of resettlement in the interior. There were only four householders in Sinhapura who chose to rebuild their house on the same place where it had been. These were neighbouring households, all of crew members, with their damaged houses very close to the beach. They lived in one of the temporary shelters until their new houses were rebuilt on the spot where the old ones had been, and they were able to move back. The Red Cross added Rs. 750,000/- to the state grant of Rs. 250,000/- and built each of them a two storey house by August 2006.

These four households expressed their satisfaction with the houses which, particularly with the assistance from the Red Cross, gave them a two storey house. There was little conflict over the state grant of Rs. 250,000/-. The damage was apparent, the entitlement clear and the compensation was given through the proper bureaucratic channels.

The entitlement from the state to repair a partially damaged house was Rs. 100,000/-. This partial damage included holes in the floor and damaged foundations; water soaked walls with cracks; broken windows and damaged outdoor toilets; damaged roofs. The Grama Niladhari (GN) took the Technical Officer (TO) around Sinhapura and pointed out the damage. The TO, with the GN's collaboration, made the assessment of partial or full damage and noted it on the GN's housing register. 130 houses were deemed partially damaged. However, there were another 48 houses which, according to the survey of the Trust, were also damaged, in differing degrees, which were not included

in this list. Several households on the High Street, apart from those on the seaside, claimed this compensation. The ability to prove ownership of property -- whether joint or single -- in terms of a deed or the paying of rates and utilities, had implications for the entitlement to the Rs. 100,000/- and the Rs. 250,000/-.¹⁴⁷ However, the most important criterion was to have the endorsement of the GN and the TO, and to be on their list. Once the lists of partially damaged houses were compiled the officials at the Divisional Secretariat, Hikkaduwa, did not query, in great detail, deeds and other documentation relating to the rights of ownership. The first round of disbursement of the Rs. 100,000/- was in June/July 2005. The second round was at the end of 2006.

The most intense conflict between the state and the people of Sinhapura centred around the Rs. 100,000/- grant. The controversy arose over the allegation, by many disaffected householders, that the GN and the TO had done the assessment of damage in a cursory and biased manner. The majority in the village felt that the GN had favoured those with whom he had personal connections and deprived others of their entitlement to state aid. Furthermore, that the GN had demanded a bribe of Rs. 5000/- from every householder in order to release the Rs. 100,000/-. This sum, it was alleged, he shared with the TO.

Shanika was one of those whose application for the grant for partial damage was rejected. She asserted that the real reason for this was that it would have been awkward for the GN to ask her for the Rs. 5000/- 'bribe' -- one of his colleagues, the GN of the next village, was her uncle. Furthermore, she asserted, the GN had not even come inside the house but had 'inspected' it standing on the High Street. The GN had responded evasively to Shanika's repeated requests for inclusion in his register. He had told her that he was willing to confirm that her husband's welding business, located in their garden, had been destroyed. The letter from the GN certifying damage to the welding business was endorsed by the Divisional Secretary in Hikkaduwa. This was neither here nor there as the Rs. 100,000/- grant applied only to partial damage to houses. Shanika campaigned vigorously in pursuit of her claim. Fobbed off, as she felt she had been, by the Divisional Secretary who had told her, misleadingly, that the grant was limited to damage within the 100m buffer zone Shanika had written to the District Secretary in Galle setting out her grievances in detail: that her house, and not merely the welding business, had been damaged; that, despite her entitlement the GN had unfairly omitted

¹⁴⁷ Source: Informant Session with Mr. Dhanapala, Assistant, Projects Division, Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat, 8/8/2008.

her household from his register; that this rejection had placed her household in serious difficulty; her husband, a government servant had had to obtain a loan for repairs to make the house liveable; that his salary was drastically reduced by the loan repayments and that their household of six was finding it very difficult to meet their day to day living expenses. The District Secretary replied with the promise that he would get the Divisional Secretary to investigate the matter and take action. However, neither at the time that I was doing my fieldwork, nor subsequently, had any action been taken to redress Shanika's grievance.¹⁴⁸

Daya owned a shop on the High Street which sold nets and other gear to fishermen. It was one of the few buildings which had suffered considerable structural damage. He did not, however, qualify for inclusion in the GN's register because, as alleged by the GN, the premises housed a business and was not a private residence. Daya felt that his exclusion, though technically correct, was without any moral justification since, as he pointed out, there were several people who had received the grant without a vestige of a rightful claim to do so. As far as he was concerned, from a moral point of view, he was entitled to this compensation. Daya told me that those who had received this compensation, fraudulently, kept very quiet about it, although it was common knowledge in the village as to who these people were. Although in 2005, as Co-ordinator of the Trust, I came to 'know' who these individuals were, when I was doing my fieldwork, I found it impossible to get a single person to admit to having received this benefit. People were discrete, even three years after the event. In the course of an interview, I asked the question outright from one of this group, who denied it categorically. The individual concerned was only prepared to go so far as to admit that, to his knowledge, there were 'others' who had received this grant on a fraudulent basis.

Ranee's house, on the seaside and adjacent to the High Street, was not included by the GN on his register though, as she claimed, it met all the criteria for partial damage. The family petitioned the Divisional Secretary and as a result the TO was compelled to visit the house again after which, certification that it qualified for compensation was made. Ranee's family had had a long-standing property dispute with the GN. She felt that this personal dispute was the cause of the GN's attempt to deprive her household of its rightful entitlement. This was one of the few instances where the intervention of the

¹⁴⁸ See Caron (2009) for the discussion of similar experiences in the post-tsunami context, in the Colombo District.

Divisional Secretary had a positive outcome. Most often the decision of the GN was allowed to stand.

The school teacher, Charlotte, was also refused this grant. Charlotte's assertion was that the GN and the TO did not do a proper investigation of the damage to her property. She stated that they looked at it from outside when most of the damage was internal. Charlotte told me that she felt that the GN and the TO had already decided, before they commenced the investigation, who was to be compensated and who was not, on the basis of who would be likely, and able, to pay the bribe of Rs. 5000/-.

When it began to be apparent that individual appeals to the Divisional Secretariat in Hikkaduwa were, in effect, a waste of time Shanika took the initiative and banded together eighteen non-recipients of the Rs. 100,000/- compensation, who felt that they were entitled to it, into an action group. They planned to agitate for their rights. On behalf of the group, Shanika wrote to several state organisations: the Director of the Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN), later the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA); the Divisional Secretariat; the District Secretariat; the President via the Presidential Secretariat; the Ministry of Nation Building and Reconstruction; the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights; the Health Inspector, Hikkaduwa; the Human Rights Commission. She also sent a Tsunami Petition to Transparency International which was forwarded to the Investigations Division of the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs (the Divisional and District Secretariats come under the authority of this Ministry). To all these organisations she explained that there were eighteen petitioners who had not received the Rs. 100,000/- state grant because the GN and the TO had, fraudulently, not certified that their houses were damaged. Furthermore, that they had disbursed compensation to those totally unaffected by the tsunami. Shanika demanded that an investigation be carried out and the injustice rectified. She expressed outrage and stated that officials who commit fraud like the GN are a shame and a disgrace to the state. The organisations wrote back to her acknowledging receipt of her letters and stating that action would be taken. The organisations also wrote to each other, with copies to

Shanika, calling for an investigation into the complaints and appropriate redress for the petitioners.¹⁴⁹

The majority of the community denounced the GN's actions as morally reprehensible: on the one hand, he demanded a bribe to release what was a citizen's legitimate entitlement from the state; on the other, he certified as damaged those who were not, in order that they might receive this compensation. In these circumstances, the claim has been that those who were legitimately entitled to this compensation did not receive it whereas those who were not, did.

The defence of the GN was that people had abandoned their houses and were not there to be consulted when he and the TO did their rounds to assess damage. They could not enter the premises and could only certify the damage observable from the outside. Taking a similar stance, a clerk at the Divisional Secretariat told me that people had stayed away for months at a time from their damaged houses, and then descended on the Divisional Secretariat with their demands for compensation. As made out by this official, 80% of this grant had been disbursed equitably. On the issue of fraud, he took the line that at such a time it was to be expected, and that there was little that could have been done about it. He informed me that the funding for this programme which had come from the World Bank was exhausted so that even legitimate claims of those who had not by then received compensation under this scheme were highly unlikely to be met.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, he expressed the view that in the case of fraud by officials such as the GN there was no legal action that could be taken against them.¹⁵¹ Thus, in the face of dispute the strategy of state officials was to stall, to say that the claimants were out of time, and that the state was out of money.

This scheme to grant Rs. 100,000/- for partial damage posed other problems. It was the householder, as the owner of the property, who was entitled to the compensation. In some instances tenants were also claimants, for the most part unsuccessfully, for a share of the compensation. Where a house, jointly owned by several siblings, with only one of them resident, had suffered damage the problem was even more intractable. The non-

¹⁴⁹ I was able to peruse all the correspondence referred to above, intensively, with Shanika and my research assistant.

¹⁵⁰ I was told by an ex-civil servant that if the sum allotted for a particular purpose is exhausted, and the matter is important enough, it is possible to divert funds from savings under other items.

¹⁵¹ On the contrary, there are many legal mechanisms which citizens can deploy to prosecute officials of the state. Source: Gratian E. Perera, Attorney-at-law, Sri Lanka.

resident siblings would also lodge their claims to compensation, especially where it was apparent that the full sum would not be required for the repairs.

When Sunil, a crew member, received this compensation, his sister's husband, Suneetha, felt that the sum should have been shared between the two households. The damaged house had belonged to Sunil's father and his sister, too, had a share in it. Sunil felt that as the resident the compensation was his due. The conflict arose from the fact that, according to Suneetha, the house was not greatly damaged and did not require the whole of the sum of Rs. 100,000/- for the repair. Suneetha told me that after having repaired the house Sunil kept the remainder of the money for his household. Furthermore, Suneetha stated that Sunil did not need the money as he was deriving a reasonable income from the canoe given to him by the Trust.

Sajith, who ran a gas cylinder business on the High Street and lived on the same premises was the sole owner of a damaged house for which he received full compensation. He was resident in the house which housed his business, which he co-owned together with his siblings who were also resident. These premises were also damaged but the GN refused to sanction the payment of the Rs. 100,000/- for this house on the grounds that Sajith had already received compensation for one house. Thereupon, Sajith transferred legal ownership of the house to his younger brother after which the GN sanctioned payment. The rigidity with which the GN had applied the rule in his case angered Sajith since, as he told me, he had gone out of his way to help the GN with tsunami work in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

If the partial damage to a house had been repaired by an NGO the regulation, as Namalie's family discovered, was that the household became ineligible for this compensation. This family lived off the High Street, on the seaside, and Namalie's father ran a small carpentry business. Their house was repaired by an Italian NGO fairly soon after the tsunami. The GN then crossed this household off his register. Namalie's father was deeply angered and told me that he felt that the obligation to redress his loss was that of the state; therefore, irrespective of the fact that he had received outside assistance (that of the NGO) he was entitled to this compensation.

Although the households situated on the boundary with Kotigama suffered very minimal damage -- for example, a broken window -- they too received the grant. My informants stated that these households had received much more than they should have

and that the excess money had been used for other purposes. The complaint was that the state failed to look at the extent of the damage in a nuanced way. The compensation for 'partial damage' was a flat sum and disbursed even where the damage was negligible. There was much debate about this 'wrong' policy of the state which meant that some people benefited totally out of proportion to their loss. Furthermore, the recipients, too, were held to blame for the uses to which the 'excess' monies had been put, i.e., for a variety of consumption purposes. This scenario resonates with Porwal's (2007) comment that relief money is paid out to victims by the state on a supposedly equitable principle but often results in inequality.

New Housing

The initial policy of the government was to clear the 100m zone of all building and to resettle residents in housing in the interior. The houses were to be constructed on state land by a variety of organisations. Each had to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA).

The design and development of these housing schemes should have been entrusted to the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA), as the only institution of the state, as asserted by a former manager of the NHDA, which was experienced in the handling of large housing projects. However, as the manager informed me, there were 'political' reasons why these schemes were entrusted to the Urban Development Authority (UDA), with the NHDA sidelined. The NHDA was associated with the late President Premadasa whose party the United National Party was then in Opposition. Because of this connection, I was told, the NHDA's wealth of experience was not utilised by the government.

When the 100m rule was rescinded, in April 2006, those within the 35m line were entitled to a house; those between the 35m and 100m were entitled to a house but could opt to rebuild their house within this area. As stated above, except for four households in Sinhapura, all other residents opted for housing in the interior. In Sinhapura 75 houses on the seaside were razed to the ground all within the 100m zone. This included all the houses of the *unavasara*, who had lived on the beach.

The state was concerned with speed. The President, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, had stated that all affected populations would be rehoused within three

months. The UDA architect whom I interviewed regarded this statement as absurd as the planning of a settlement, in terms of water, drainage, sewage systems etc., takes a minimum of six months. Furthermore, he contended that even in a disaster situation certain rules and procedures regarding the construction of a human settlement would have to be followed. The state put pressure on the UDA architects and engineers to speedily contour the land for building, and provide the designs for roadways, drainage and sanitation. There was pressure from the government, as well as from donors and NGOs, to rehouse the tsunami affected populations speedily. Owing to this pressure once the plans had been approved by the UDA architects there was no provision for quality assurance, on issues such as sanitation and drainage. There were, moreover, many conflicts between various ministers, the UDA and individual politicians who wanted the UDA to act quickly such that the tsunami-affected could move into their new homes speedily.

The UDA provided four types of designs of houses from which the organisation doing the construction could choose. This can be contrasted with Tamil Nadu, India where Dharmaraj (2007) asserts that the state government had one design for housing which was, in many ways, unsuitable for coastal communities.

The NGOs mediated between the prominent, international donors and the government. Once the MOUs had been signed with the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA), the NGOs farmed out the tsunami housing contracts to the big companies in the construction business, which then sub-contracted them out to smaller contractors.

At this time, there were many allegations in the public domain that these organisations took a percentage of the funds, received from donors, for their own purposes. They did this, it was alleged, by the state authorities and by the target communities, by issuing false receipts and by encouraging contractors to over-estimate costs and, thereafter, use inferior material. According to the UDA architect only a percentage of the original donor amount ‘trickled down’ and was utilised in the construction of the houses. Few NGOs have responded to these allegations in any public forum. Some NGOs, however, have defended themselves by asserting that it was the sub-contractors who had defrauded them. The RADA official that I interviewed stated that it was the NGOs that were responsible for the deficiencies in the construction of the houses: they had failed to control and supervise the construction leaving it to the contractors. This official

contended, furthermore, that the speed with which the government had signed MOUs with NGOs, meant that the MOUs were flawed and that it was difficult to hold the NGOs to account for their breaches of contract.

The District Secretariats, the NGOs, the UDA and the contractors blamed each other for the substandard housing that had resulted. Officials that I spoke to at the District Secretariat and the UDA assigned the blame for the poor quality of the housing to the inferior work produced by the sub-contractors. The UDA architect, for instance, told me that, given the knowledge and expertise to be found in Sri Lanka at the time, much better results should have been achieved, in terms of the quality of the housing and in terms of the selection of geographical locations for the siting of the new housing complexes. This same point is echoed by Mulligan & Nadarajah (2012) and by Brun & Lund (2010). The officials of the District Secretariat on the other hand placed the blame, fairly and squarely on the UDA for not having adequately overseen the housing projects. They also blamed the NGOs for the corrupt activities of their sub-contractors. The UDA, in its turn, blamed the politicians and local administrators for the pressure placed on the organisation to deliver within a stipulated time-frame, with no cognisance of the fact that a housing settlement needs extensive preparation in terms of approach roads, drainage and sanitation. Hettige (2007) makes the criticism that settlements should have been planned better in the sense of composition in terms of ethnicity, religion and caste. Despite their differences, all the officials that I spoke to at the NHDA, the UDA, RADA and the District Secretariat in Galle, were united in their insistence that the inefficiency and corrupt practices which, as they alleged, were rife in the housing projects, were due, on the one hand, to the pressure applied by politicians at all levels who were determined that coastal populations should be resettled in their new homes, speedily and very visibly, and, on the other, to the negligence of the NGOs and their defaulting contractors.¹⁵²

Right throughout 2005 there was uncertainty whether the policy that everyone within the 100m buffer zone was to be allotted a house would in fact be fully implemented. The people in temporary housing, in three locations in Sinhapura, received their new houses in the middle of 2006, towards the end of 2006, and at the beginning of 2007,

¹⁵² This account of the wider, post-tsunami housing dynamic in Sri Lanka is based on interviews and informant sessions with the following organisations: the UDA; the NHDA; RADA; the UC in Hikkaduwa; the Divisional Secretariat in Hikkaduwa; the District Secretariat in Galle.

respectively.¹⁵³ In the case of a joint household, each nuclear family within it, received a house. There was no conflict and the 75 households in Sinhapura were given houses. While the allocation of houses went smoothly in Sinhapura this was not so elsewhere along the coastline. People in these communities felt that a policy intended to promote their security and wellbeing, was being manipulated, to their detriment, by the lower tiers of the bureaucracy who used this opportunity to extend or withhold patronage. The unrest over this issue escalated to the point that the government feared that it had the makings of a political disaster. To avert such an outcome it was decided to give houses under this scheme with no strict adherence to the criteria originally stipulated. As a result houses were given, en masse, even sometimes to those whose dwellings had been outside the 100m buffer zone.¹⁵⁴

As people began moving to the new settlements the defects of construction began to be apparent. The roofs leaked, cracks appeared in the walls, and the kitchens were unsuitable for those accustomed to cooking with firewood.¹⁵⁵ Despite this the majority of the new settlers were glad to have acquired a house and land. Ranjanie, a member of the *unavasara* group, described her house as a 'palace'. She told me, however, that the roof in her kitchen alcove leaked so much that she had to hold an umbrella over her head while cooking if it was raining heavily.

75 households from Sinhapura moved to the settlements in the interior. Although the fishermen came to Sinhapura everyday to go to sea during the fishing season it became apparent that the relocation, 7kms to the interior, would have an impact on Sinhapura. The volume of business on the High Street dropped markedly as the new settlements developed their own commerce. The supply of casual labour -- unskilled work in building construction, coconut plucking, the clearing of gardens, the cutting of trees -- was affected, as the *unavasara* households who had supplied much of this labour had left the village. As the emigrants were largely from the seaside the relationship between the landside and the seaside was affected. In any dispute with neighbouring Kotigama Sinhapura was left weakened.

¹⁵³ There were 105 housing complexes established in the Galle District. Source: Clerk, Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat, 23/5/2008.

¹⁵⁴ Source: a Special Advisor to the President; official of the District Secretariat in Galle.

¹⁵⁵ In Sinhapura and right along the coastline people were used to cooking in small outhouses, at the back of, and separate from, the main house. The reason for this is that cooking with firewood releases a lot of soot which stains everything in its vicinity.

Some years before the tsunami the Galle Road had been widened. In all these coastal communities private land had been acquired by the state and compensation paid. In some instances some part of the compensation due was yet to be settled, at the time of the tsunami. In the late 1990s, premises, which included lands and buildings, had been acquired. Though people lost their houses the funds allocated for the payment of compensation, were limited to payments based on land value only, excluding the value of the house.¹⁵⁶ For most people, the limited compensation that they received, enabled them to buy land but not to put up a house. Many harboured a sense of grievance against the state on this account. The tsunami afforded these people the opportunity to seek redress in the form of petitioning the Divisional Secretary for a house. This was a latent dispute with the state, which erupted at the time of the tsunami.

Sharma had owned a house and land on the High Street, at the main junction in Sinhapura. The house was demolished when her land was acquired for road widening in the late 1990s. Sharma was one of the few people who received land, in 2003, as compensation instead of a lump sum in cash. This land, ten perches (1 perch = 272 square feet) in extent, was situated in the interior 10 kms from Sinhapura. Since the acquisition, Sharma had had to move around, staying for short spells in each case with relatives and friends. Sharma, aged 52 in 2008, was unmarried and made a living selling vegetables door to door. Although she did own land, there was no hope that her daily earnings would enable her to build a house. In any event, living in the interior, far away from family and friends was not, for her, an attractive proposition.

At the time of the tsunami Sharma was living in a rented room in a neighbouring village. The GN of Sinhapura had issued a certificate stating that Sharma was living in rented premises. Sharma claimed that the GN had rendered her ineligible for compensation and deprived her of a house since he had not taken into account her previous history which, in her view, should have clinched the matter. Her reasoning was that if her house had been standing in its original location, at the junction, it would have been destroyed as the tsunami waters had flooded this area. It was on this premise that she claimed that she was entitled to a house. The state criteria for post-tsunami compensation excluded Sharma: she was living in rented accommodation; at the time of

¹⁵⁶ When the state, in Sri Lanka, gives compensation for the acquisition of land it is based on the assessment of a government valuer.

the tsunami her house had not existed at the site near the junction; most important, she had already received compensation for acquisition of premises under the state's road widening project. These 'technicalities' were repudiated by Sharma. Sharma's position was that the government took her land and her house but that she received only land as compensation. In this transaction she felt that she had been unjustly treated and that, from a moral point of view, she was entitled to a house.

Sharma wrote to the Divisional Secretary seeking compensation in the form of a house under the Tsunami Housing Scheme. She appealed also to the District Secretary who wrote back, stipulating that she should obtain a certificate verifying that the facts that she had alleged were true and that she should, thereafter, see him together with the GN. Sharma showed me this correspondence and told me that the GN had refused to go to the District Secretariat with her. Sharma also made an entry at the police station detailing her personal circumstances and stating her conviction that she was entitled to a tsunami house which, as she asserted, was being given to other people randomly and for a host of reasons. She wrote, in addition, to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights stating that she had written to the Divisional and District Secretariats but that they had rejected her claim.

Fisheries

The state was required to give a craft as restitution only to those that were registered with the Fisheries Inspector of the area. Lack of registration with the state authorities had implications for entitlement to compensation. At the time of the tsunami Sinhapura's fishing fleet consisted of 60 *wallams*, 15 canoes and 15 multi-day boats. While the multi-day boats were registered with the Fisheries Inspector very few of the *wallams* were. In such circumstances, boat owners had to produce a witness, to the fact of ownership, at the Fisheries Inspector's Office and to swear an affidavit, before a Notary Public or a Justice of the Peace (JP). Only then was compensation a possibility.

The state's programme of providing boats as compensation to fishermen was conducted through organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). It supported the reconstruction of the fishing industry in various ways, mainly by providing services such as the repair of engines etc. through organisations such as the Cey-Nor Development Foundation and the Sri Lanka Navy. Centres run by these

organisations were located at various points on the south-western coast, including Sinhapura.

Although many of the *wallams* in Sinhapura were not registered with the fisheries inspector boat owners, nevertheless, saw it as the obligation of the state to provide new craft for that which had been lost. There were some who attempted to exploit the prevailing uncertainty by swearing false affidavits about ownership and by getting 'witnesses' to support their contention. Samarapala, for instance, a crew member, managed to get two witnesses to swear before the Fisheries Inspector that he had owned a *wallam*. When this information spread through the village there were several other 'witnesses' who refuted this claim to the fisheries inspector. These, and similar attempts, provoked a strong reaction from the established *wallam* owners in the days after the tsunami. They had gone through an arduous process -- saving, securing a loan, buying a boat, repaying the loan -- in obtaining their *wallams* and saw no reason why there should be a shortcut to *wallam* ownership, because of this disaster. These *wallam* owners could do nothing, however, about the boats which were distributed by foreign nationals. They felt that the 'undeserving' people who received them had disrupted the established order of the community.

In the event, only one person in Sinhapura received a boat from the state for the one that he had lost. All the other boats were given by NGOs and by foreign nationals. The boat owners' perspective was that the few net pieces that were given by the state were not adequate for fashioning into a complete net.

Dispute Resolution

One of the mechanisms instituted by the state to resolve the disputes, between the state and tsunami-affected populations, relating to the programmes of relief and rehabilitation, was the creation of the post of Additional District Secretary. In the case of alleged injustices perpetrated by the GN, the first step was a petition to the Divisional Secretariat in the case of Sinhapura, situated in Hikkaduwa. The second step was a petition to the District Secretariat. The idea was that these Additional District Secretaries would investigate and solve the problems encountered by the tsunami-affected populations. Communities such as Sinhapura had little faith in the investigative abilities of this official and the impartiality of this process. As a result, people sought redress from the higher levels of the administration. In the case of the eighteen

petitioners from Sinhapura although there was a great deal of correspondence between the various arms of the central administration, as no institution made itself accountable for the investigation there was no resolution of this issue.

Another mechanism was the Tsunami Mediation Boards. Mediation Boards had been in existence for many years to settle disputes between private citizens, without recourse to the courts. The Tsunami Mediation Boards held special sessions to deal with petitions regarding tsunami injustices. The case of the eighteen households in Sinhapura which did not receive the Rs. 100,000/- was referred to the Tsunami Mediation Board, for the Galle District, by the Divisional Secretary of Hikkaduwa. The Chairman of the Mediation Board had written to Shanika and asked her to come for a mediation session on the matter, bringing all relevant documents and witnesses with her. She was told that absence from the meeting would be taken as a lack of interest in the resolution of the problem. At the meeting, Shanika and some of the other petitioners presented their evidence and the GN, who was also present, admitted his wrong-doing. However, he contended that he could not rectify the wrong that he had committed, without grave repercussions for himself such as the loss of his government position and pension rights. The Tsunami Mediation Board stated that they could not resolve the matter, as there was no common ground from which the two disputing parties might attempt to reach resolution. They stated that the petitioners should take legal action in terms of a Fundamental Rights petition as this was a dispute between several citizens and the state, whereas the Mediation Boards dealt with disputes between citizens.¹⁵⁷ Legal Aid was willing to appear on behalf of the eighteen disputants, but stated that eighteen individual cases would have to be filed. These petitioners were unwilling to file Fundamental Rights petitions in the Supreme Court. They preferred to continue their campaign vis-à-vis the Divisional Secretariat in Hikkaduwa, in the belief that persistence would yield results.

A series of workshops to resolve the problems relating to the tsunami injustices were a special, foreign-funded project of one of the ministries. These workshops were presented as a forum to discuss problems and air grievances. According to the co-

¹⁵⁷ Fundamental Rights are those rights guaranteed by the constitution in Sri Lanka. The infringement of these rights, by executive or administrative action, means that a citizen, or a relevant body, can petition the Supreme Court on a Fundamental Rights action. Source: Gratian E. Perera, Attorney-at-law, Sri Lanka.

ordinators of this project, it had no authority to prosecute wrong-doers such as the GN of Sinhapura. Their remit was to receive petitions and refer them to the relevant government authority, such as the Commission of Bribery and Corruption.

I attended the workshop held at a school in Hikkaduwa, in May 2008, together with my research assistant and some of my informants. These included Shanika and some of the other eighteen petitioners. The event was structured in terms of several issues: Child Abuse; Women's Abuse; Domestic Violence and Rape; Bribery and Corruption; Land; Housing; Compensation; and, Public Administration. The Registrar General's Department; the Social Services Department; the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs; the Commission for Bribery and Corruption; and, the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) had been invited to attend the workshop and were present. The police and the GNs of the Grama Niladhari Divisions coming under the Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat, were also present, including the GN of Sinhapura. The project co-ordinators had written to all eighteen petitioners in Sinhapura requesting their presence and stating that absence would lead to the assumption that the injustice had been rectified.

Once inside the main hall Shanika and the other petitioners approached the compensation desk. Shanika, as their spokesperson, stated the facts to the official in charge, regarding their petition. Then Shanika requested that the official summon the GN and question him. Accordingly, the GN was called. He stated that in the case of Shanika's house water had only gone into the garden, where the welding centre was situated. Shanika countered this with the statement that he had stood on the street and viewed the premises and how could he, therefore, have seen the state of damage to the floor, the kitchen or to the toilet at the back of the house. Shanika excused herself, went away, and brought back a witness. This was the previous GN of Sinhapura who was known to her uncle, the GN of another village. Although obviously reluctant, he came with Shanika, a forceful personality, with an uncle who was a respected GN. At Shanika's urging he stated that the tsunami waters had entered her house and caused considerable damage. Consequent upon this, the official took down the details of the petitioners present. He stated that the matter would be investigated and that Shanika and the others would be informed. Once the communication with the official at the compensation desk was over, and we were all about to move away, Shanika berated the

GN. She repeated her allegation that the GN could not take the bribe of Rs. 5000/- from her, to endorse the Rs. 100,000/-, because she was the niece of a fellow GN, and that, therefore, he had decided to deprive her of this benefit to which she was entitled.

After Shanika's confrontation with the GN my research assistant and I became the nucleus for a little group of Sinhapura people. One of the petitioners told me that he was in great mental pain (*hithe vedanawa*) because deserving people like himself had not received the Rs. 100,000/- compensation, whereas the 'undeserving' were enjoying the benefits of what should have come to him.

People attended the workshop from all over the region. They had come to air their grievances which they did. Some even went to the extent of berating the officials of the various government departments, for state inaction. Many asserted that these injustices arose from the wrong-doing of government officials such as the GN and the TO. They had already presented their complaints to the Tsunami Mediation Boards, the Divisional Secretaries and the District Secretaries. At the conclusion of the workshop, people were told by the organisers that they would be informed about the progress of their case.

As far as the petitioners were concerned the workshop was not perceived as a success. They thought it a waste of time, where nothing was accomplished other than another 'recital' of their problems, to indifferent representatives of various government institutions. The workshop organizers, on the other hand, were pleased with the outcome of the event. They felt that a 'productive' airing of grievances had taken place. As an observer of the event, it appeared to me that the workshop was a damage limitation exercise to make tsunami-affected populations, who felt unjustly treated by the state, feel that their concerns were important to the state and that something was being done. It also seemed more like a research exercise, by the organisers of the workshop, to examine how the state programmes of compensation had worked out in practice. According to the petitioners, some of whom were my informants in Sinhapura, they have heard nothing further from the organisers of this workshop or from any government body.

The Implications of the State Programmes

The relief and reconstruction initiatives of the state gave rise to several issues. These are analysed, below, in terms of the responses of different categories of people. My focus is

on the interaction between the state programmes, and individuals and households in the remaking of Sinhapura.

On the seaside, the fishing households and the *unavasara* felt that, as it was *they* who had been primarily affected by the disaster, compensation by the state should be reserved for them. The traders of the High Street countered this claim: their lives, too, had been shattered and they were equally entitled to compensation from the state. People on the landside were not deterred by the fact that they had not, for the most part, suffered actual damage. They argued that the community as a whole had suffered owing to the devastation caused by the tsunami and that, therefore, they, too, were entitled to the state benefits, particularly the Tsunami Card and the Rs. 20,000/-.

For many people, the state programmes were a source of capital which could be put to 'work' in terms of realising aspirations. There were those who were entitled to state compensation, in terms of the policy criteria, but who, owing to the uniform and undifferentiated operation of state programmes had received sums in excess of that which they had lost. In this category were, the households of crew members, service providers, those employed external to the village, and the *unavasara*.

As it became apparent that the resources at the disposal of the state were limited, a keen sense of competition to obtain as great a share of it as possible began to surface in the community. As Simpson states in relation to the Gujarat post-disaster phenomenon: "..... access to the government's coffers became highly competitive and a source of jealousy, rivalry and suspicion." (Simpson:2005:238). People in Sinhapura were acutely aware that in its attempts to access these resources it was in competition with the villages of the region, particularly Kotigama and Hikkaduwa. There were those households which had 'creatively' interpreted the notion of entitlement and managed to accrue to themselves, by circumventing the rules of disbursement and by exploiting the ambiguities of the schemes, the state benefits to which they had no legitimate right. This was alleged to be the case where the Tsunami Card; the benefit of Rs. 20,000/-; and the Rs. 100,000/- compensation for partial damage were concerned.

There was the perception, in the community, that those on the seaside who had suffered very little damage to their properties should not have received the entire Rs. 100,000/- benefit for partial damage. People felt that very little of the benefit, obtained in such circumstances, was used for reconstruction, the majority of the sum being spent on

consumer goods or diverted to an income generating activity. Where a household used the compensation for a purpose other than the intended one, the community took it as amounting to proof that that household was undeserving of the benefit. Among those who expressed themselves freely on this issue, were the 48 households who had not received the compensation of Rs. 100,000/-. These allegations were made by those who felt that they were entitled to this benefit and did not receive it. They were also made by those on the landside who felt that these households were acquiring illegitimate capital. They were also concerned about the implications for their relative social positions.

For the households of crew members, given their levels of income, the Tsunami Card and the benefit of Rs. 20,000/- was a substantial sum in village terms. Those who received a house were very satisfied with their lot, especially where they had no clear title to the property in respect of which they were being compensated, or where the property had been held in joint ownership. The female-headed households on the seaside who were affected by the tsunami were also at a level of income where the Tsunami Card and the Rs. 20,000/- were a substantial benefit. Some also received a house while others had to fight for the Rs. 100,000/- given for partial damage. The *unavasara* were the category of households in Sinhapura who felt that they had benefited the most from the operation of the state programmes of compensation. From their condition of poverty and marginalisation, living as unwanted squatters on the beach, the state schemes, particularly the house in the interior, were unexpected windfalls. They found themselves in a new community, with some capital at their disposal through the Tsunami Card and the Rs. 20,000/-.

Those who were employed in organisations external to the village were, for the most part, from the landside. In the case of those who suffered damage, in the aftermath of the tsunami, the loss was a loss of employment income stemming from the fact that businesses had been extensively destroyed whether, e.g., a retail store or a tourist hotel, in Hikkaduwa and Galle and all along the southern coastal belt.¹⁵⁸ If income was affected then they were entitled to the Tsunami Card as well as the benefit of Rs. 20,000/-. In this category were those whose salary was less than the sum that they received through the Tsunami Card and the Rs. 20,000/-. Therefore, their 'income' improved and their overall resource position was enhanced. Similarly, the service

¹⁵⁸ This predicament did not affect government employees. Even if the local premises were considerably damaged the government continued to pay its employees.

providers received the Tsunami Card and the benefit of Rs. 20,000/- but were not entitled to a house or the Rs. 100,000/-, as they lived on the landside and their properties were not damaged. Their grievance was that, in the event of damage to expensive equipment, which had implications for their livelihood, there were no state schemes of compensation.

The government did little to help businesses recover except by making arrangements with banks regarding low interest loans. However, the banks tended to follow established principles and the result was that only 'big business' was able to secure such loans.¹⁵⁹ The small and medium enterprises, such as those in Sinhapura, found it very difficult to secure loans from banks because their business activities were not sufficiently large in scale and they found it difficult to provide collateral for the loan. The High Street traders of Sinhapura felt that in terms of the scale of their loss, the state benefits of the Tsunami Card and the Rs. 20,000/- did not approach anything like the full compensation for their loss. At their level of income, somewhat similar to the *wallam* owners, these benefits were not very relevant. They were not eligible for houses as their premises were not totally destroyed. They were not eligible for the Rs. 100,000/- if the premises damaged was not also a residence but purely a business centre. The most serious lacuna in the state programmes as far as the High Street traders were concerned, was the lack of compensation for the losses suffered by small-scale businesses.

Bernard had a grocery store on the High Street and lived behind the store. The tsunami waters came right into his premises and washed away his stock, in addition to the household goods. He had little capital, saved, with which to re-start his business, nor was its scale of such an order that the banks would consider a loan. While he received the Tsunami Card and the Rs. 20,000/- he received no direct help from the state to re-start his business. He felt entitled to state compensation and was aggrieved that there was no such scheme.

The affluent households in Sinhapura, particularly the multi-day boat owners, felt that the state compensation did not amount to more than a fraction of what they had lost. The perception in the community was that Palitha Mudalali was a 'rich man' who had a multi-day boat and several *wallams*. However, as he told me, he was not 'cash-rich' as

¹⁵⁹ Please refer Chapter 1.

he was paying off a heavy loan on the multi-day boat and had eight children to clothe, feed, educate and give in marriage. Thus, he felt that he was entitled to much more than what he saw as 'minimum' compensation from the state -- a small house of 500 square feet, in one of the new housing complexes, the Tsunami Card and the benefit of Rs. 20,000/-. In a similar vein, the *wallam* owners whose boats were completely destroyed felt that the state should have had a scheme for the restoration of a boat, irrespective of the lack of registration. The affluent households found that they were thrust into the position of playing client vis-à-vis the institutions of the state. They felt that the state compensation was inadequate. In addition, they felt that being dependent on the state for assistance compromised the social position which they had previously enjoyed. For the poor, however, playing client was a role to which they were accustomed.

The narratives of blame articulated by the households of multi-day boat owners as well as *wallam* owners was the context in which there was an ongoing debate on the question whether a household was entitled to the full value of its loss, from the state. The feeling in Sinhapura, amongst the poorer households, was that affluent households had a variety of contacts and avenues to recover their loss whereas poorer households were wholly dependent on state benefits. The multi-day boat owners, were in total disagreement with the view that they had the capacity to recover with little assistance from the state. On the contrary, their view was that their capacity to recover was not as strong as it was popularly supposed; that what they had lost was considerable; and that, therefore, they were entitled to a far greater volume of state compensation than those of a lower social position who had had little and, therefore, had lost little; and, that activating contacts was very difficult in a situation of widespread devastation. This point of view resonates with that made by Cernea (2003) that compensation in disaster situations does not compensate people fully for what they have suffered -- that while there is obvious financial compensation, there is little for the loss of intangibles such as goodwill, custom and networks. The affluent households of Sinhapura felt that the poor, such as the *unavasara*, had improved their social position, through no effort of theirs, but entirely through the state benefits which they had received. The perception was that this was not a legitimate advancement of social position. It may then be said that the uniform scheme of compensation devised by the government had this effect. On the one hand, the richer segments felt that they were not adequately compensated for their losses and also that the losses of intangibles were barely recognised in this scheme. On the

other hand, the uniform application of the rules meant that some people ended in a much better position than that prior to the tsunami.

There were those households which were entitled to compensation but did not receive it due to the literal and rigid application of the criteria of eligibility, by the officials of the state agencies. Charlotte, for instance, felt that she missed out on the last two tranches of the benefit of Rs. 20,000/- on a technicality. Similarly, those such as Suneetha, with a joint-share in a partially damaged house, felt that they had a claim to a share of the Rs. 100,000/-. They felt that the joint owners, residing on the premises at the time of the tsunami, had illegitimately appropriated the entire compensation for themselves. So, too, with those whose premises had been repaired by NGOs. They felt that they had been unjustly treated when they were informed that the NGO assistance rendered them ineligible for compensation. Every household experiences a disaster in a very distinctive way. In this sense, the state's schemes of rehabilitation, designed for uniform application, and formulated on an assumption of the homogeneity of household need, did not meet the needs of every household. In the case of Sinhapura, those individuals who felt that the state schemes were implemented to their detriment, were quick to allege that the programmes had not been implemented by the state, equitably; and that the principles of justice and entitlement had not been followed.

Using state compensation intended to repair housing or for living expenses, for the repayment of loans was regarded as indefensible. This criticism was made, most strongly, by those who felt that they had not received the full complement of compensation for the losses that they had suffered. The perception was that if these benefits were used in this manner, the losses suffered by these households did not merit compensation.

Another issue that merits some discussion is the way in which unresolved disputes with the state, such as the matter of land acquisition for road widening, came to play a role in the citizens' interaction with state at the time of the tsunami. Sharma's experience reveals that there was the feeling in Sinhapura that this was the opportunity to resolve the dispute, to the advantage of the citizen. The perception was that the state was disbursing 'hand-outs', and that if their needs, relating to the issue of road widening, could be brought in under the tsunami umbrella, then they would have a better chance of success than in more 'normal' times.

The view in Sinhapura, widespread in the immediate post-tsunami period, was that the way in which state aid came to be channelled to the undeserving and away from those with legitimate claims, was to be laid at the door of the GN, and his partner in wrongdoing the TO. The GN was the central government official at the village level and had a wide range of administrative functions. These functions meant that the residents of the village were dependent upon him for certificates and approvals of various sorts. Thus, linkages were established with the community and he was in a position of patronage and power.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, the imperatives of the situation were such that the state had little option but to place a large measure of responsibility upon the GN. Little supervision by his superiors in the central administration, was possible if relief was to reach the tsunami-affected populations quickly. The GN had it in his power to certify damage to a household. It was on the basis of this that categories of aid were disbursed. This placed the GN in control over tsunami aid, at the village level. Thus, the GN had power over sums of money which were substantial in village terms, and his position developed into one of even greater influence than before the tsunami. As far as households were concerned, the capacity to acquire the benefits of the state was mediated, in many instances, by alliances with the GN and the significance of these alliances in the GN's decision-making behaviour regarding damage.

The opportunity, therefore, presented itself for many GNs, including the one of Sinhapura, to acquire extra-legal income. All GNs, on the south-western coast, were not perceived as having used this opportunity to consolidate their personal resources. The GN from a neighbouring village, one of my informants, was regarded as having behaved in an exemplary manner in the post-disaster disbursement of aid. No taint of bribery or corruption attached to him. His reward was not financial, but the appreciation of the community for a job conscientiously done, at a difficult time. He was regarded with much respect in the community where he was the GN -- as embodying certain ideals and values -- and this *vadagath* position was very important to him. Thus, in the post-tsunami context, he pursued a very different strategy to that of the GN of Sinhapura. The latter had little interest in the cultivation of this kind of social position, but was far more interested in the pursuit of financial capital.

Given the fact that Sinhapura's linkages to national politicians, since 1978, had become attenuated, the community was not able to call upon 'higher authorities' to influence and discipline local officials, such as the GN, as would have happened in an earlier era. This scenario also illustrates the point that in this disaster context a local official collapsed the distinction between his role as a 'public servant' and his role as a 'private citizen'. The public role was utilised to increase his personal resources and to pursue private aspirations, thereby, improving the position in his social world (Fuller & Harriss, 2001).¹⁶⁰ The two roles came to be blurred. At any one point the GN was acting both in his official capacity as GN, disbursing funds and exercising patronage and power, and in his capacity as a member of the Salagama caste, of the community of Kotigama, pursuing his private interests.

From the multiplicity of perspectives articulated by different segments of Sinhapura society two opposing positions can be identified. On the one hand, the more affluent households of the community took the view that the purpose of state aid was to restore households to what they were, not in terms of an absolute standard, but in relation to other households. On the other, those households characterised by poverty and marginalisation, felt that this was an opportunity for the state to facilitate their rise in social position, and for Sinhapura to move in the direction of a more egalitarian and more equitable society.

Conclusion

Compensation, and the moral narratives about the entitlement to this compensation, had thus become the dominant idiom of interaction between Sinhapura and the state in the post-tsunami context.

Sinhapura's cultural context shaped the narratives about entitlement, and it is in terms of this that individuals and households made moral judgements about the legitimacy of the compensation. Underpinning these views was the articulated concern with the distribution of capital, in the aftermath of the tsunami, and the impact of this on relative social position. As described above, the idea that households should be the recipients of

¹⁶⁰ I came to know in 2008 that the GN had given his daughter in marriage with a car as part of her dowry. As my informants told me, this was far in excess of what would be given as a dowry both in Sinhapura and Kotigama, except perhaps by the households of the multiday-boat owners. The perception in the village was that the GN had been able to give this enhanced dowry because of the financial benefits he derived, extra-legally, during the post-tsunami period.

benefits which were not the result of personal effort and hard work, was regarded as unjust. Thus, there were views about legitimate social advancement, as exemplified by the social processes of this community before the tsunami -- hard work; the accumulation of capital; investment; and the continuation of this cycle -- and illegitimate social advancement, as portrayed by the way in which some households utilised the resources from the state, to 'leap-frog' to an enhanced social position. These views were not always consistent with the principles of equitable restitution which underpinned the policy criteria of the state assistance programmes.

The resources provided by the state, had the effect of situating households in Sinhapura in different social positions, in relation to each other. Some individuals and households were able to accumulate capital, principally economic capital, through the productive use of alliances such as those which had been established with the GN, in a way that would not have been possible had the processes of community reproduction continued without the impact of the tsunami. There was an urgency and an immediacy with regard to accessing the new sources of capital which, clearly were recognised, as not being limitless, which had the effect of generating strong competition. The resource position of households was altered in terms of capital and, therefore, capacity and the consequent ability to pursue aspirations. The social position of households changed relative to each other.

The *unavasara* were the households which most dramatically improved in social position and, in doing so, realised many of their aspirations. The households of the multi-day boat owners, the *wallam* owners and the High Street traders found that their losses of capital had implications for their social position in the community. In the case of the households of crew members, service providers, and those externally employed the state schemes of compensation, together with the non-governmental ones, detailed in the next chapter, secured for them a compensation which was commensurate with the loss suffered. However, in this latter group of categories there were households which differed from this pattern. In some cases they managed to secure compensation which was greater than their loss. In contrast, households such as that of Charlotte, whose losses were greater than the volume of compensation that they received, experienced a decline in overall capital, capacity and, therefore, social position.

What comment can be made about the tensions between the two sides of the village, in this context? The landside felt that the seaside had received compensation from the state which was commensurate with loss and that a particular group on the seaside, the *unavasara*, had received compensation at levels which were far in excess of their loss. The seaside, on the other hand, maintained that it was they who had been principally affected by the tsunami and that, therefore, the landside's entitlement to compensation was morally suspect. Furthermore, that in a situation of finite resources the landside had received resources which should by right have come to them.

The volume of resources which flowed into Sinhapura was not of a sufficient order to affect the ideology, the aspirations and the lifestyle of the two sides of the village. Those on the landside continued to pursue a *vadagath* lifestyle. The fishing households continued with their lifestyle, disrupted for a time in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, although the social position of some households, had been altered relative to others. To this extent, the equilibrium which had prevailed between the two sides of the village -- in terms of behaviour, lifestyle, the pursuit of aspirations, conditioned by ideology -- was maintained. Thus, the social processes of Sinhapura, as described in the previous chapter -- where individuals and households were accumulating capital, redefining capacity, in terms of the alliances available to them, and pursuing their aspirations -- were not transformed by the inflow of state resources, consequent upon the tsunami.

Chapter 5 -- The NGO Programmes

Introduction

In this chapter I am concerned with the impact of the post-tsunami rehabilitation initiatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and of the organisations of the United Nations (UN) system, on the social processes of Sinhapura.

At the time of the tsunami in contrast with the state, with which Sinhapura had an established relationship, NGOs -- both international and local -- were not prominent in Sinhapura and the villages surrounding it. Bornstein (2003) describes a situation in Zimbabwe where religion and economic development, intertwined within an over-arching political framework, were the basis for the actions of NGOs. This was not a feature of the south-western coast of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, there were few village level associations supported by local NGOs. There were, however, a number of microfinance organisations operating village level savings societies.¹⁶¹

As described in the last chapter, the programmes instituted by the state in response to this disaster were criticised on two counts. The first was that the nature of the policy criteria of the programmes designed by the government, left some categories of people with little compensation for their losses while others received in excess of that which had been lost. The second criticism was that the programmes were not implemented equitably. Some of these criticisms were articulated in a statement made by civil society organisations on the occasion of the Donor Forum held from 16-17 May 2005, 'Rebuilding Sri Lanka: Post-Tsunami Action Plan'. At the Forum these organisations put forward the demand that TAFREN, the taskforce dominated by 'big business', be disbanded and replaced with a people's planning commission composed of representatives of affected communities and their organisations. These organisations were of the view, moreover, that the government should abandon all attempts to restrict people's rights of access to land in terms of buffer zones, tourism zones and high security zones.¹⁶²

With the programmes initiated by the NGOs the issues were somewhat different. Local communities did not feel entitled to compensation from these organisations, in the way

¹⁶¹ In Sinhapura there were 7 microfinance societies.

¹⁶² Source: www.omiusajpic.org/docs/disaster/sri_lanka_sign-on.htm Accessed 2 May 2008.

that they felt entitled to compensation from the state. The same imperatives which operated on the state did not operate upon them: “While welfare states speak of entitlements, NGO discourse, in contrast, has moved toward a charity model.” (Bornstein:2003:116). Thus, the discourse of NGOs in the south-western region was a humanitarian one, dominated by ideas about community participation, and underpinned sometimes by a religious ideology as in the case of the organisation, World Vision (Bornstein, 2003).

As far as the NGOs were concerned, while there was competition with the state which was functioning on a very broad canvas, there was also complementarity in terms of filling the gaps of the state programmes and, thereby, putting resources to their best use. Furthermore, the procedures followed by the state, in the aftermath of the tsunami, had an impact on the programmes initiated by the NGOs. There was, for instance, the requirement of government certification for the disbursement of NGO relief.

In the wake of the disaster the first concern was with immediate relief: food, clothing and temporary shelter. Long-term needs such as housing, livelihoods, education, health, nutrition, as well as the repair of damaged roads, canals and bridges, and the resuscitation of the fisheries industry became the focus thereafter.

The approaches followed by NGOs were characterised by several assumptions. One of these was that affected populations were homogeneous when it came to loss and, therefore, to needs. Thus, the perception of needs and priorities was not the result of a needs assessment, made on the spot, quick though that would have had to be. It was an a priori assessment on the basis of pre-conceived notions relating to disaster relief. While this, in itself, is perhaps inevitable, what was missing is that these notions were not adapted to the prevailing conditions at the local level.¹⁶³ Devastation was defined, narrowly, so that needs could be seen to be met speedily and visibly. This was in order to conform to a particular construct of success and legitimacy (Hilhorst, 2003). As with the state programmes, differences between disaster-affected populations were rarely recognised in the design of programmes intended for uniform application. One or more programmes were duplicated in many villages and regions. This contrasts with the point

¹⁶³ The evidential base for this comment is both my experience of Sinhapura and the trends that I observed in the other communities along the southern and western coast. The interaction and, sometimes, the conflict between relief organisations, and tsunami-affected coastal populations is discussed much further in Chapter 5.

made by Frerks (2010) which is that those seeking to intervene, must know the community response in order to do the best for them.

It was a discourse dominated by ideas about rationality and progress, ideas about accumulation and consumption, and ideas about the right way to live (Bornstein, 2003). This is in contrast to the imperatives of the state programmes where the emphasis on entitlement implied restoration of what had been lost, and no more. With the NGOs, however, there was the implicit objective of going beyond what had been lost. This was the recurring concern with connecting relief to long-term development.¹⁶⁴

Reconstruction after a disaster was seen as an opportunity to initiate development programmes, which decrease the susceptibility levels of local people and mitigate the potential impact of hazards, while at the same time fostering progress. The disaster policy of NGOs was also shaped by the conditions regarding the disbursement of aid enunciated by donors who were, in turn, concerned with their constituencies.

Many organisations had clear ideologies on the basis of which their policy was founded. Aeberhard (2008), for example, points to the humanitarian model developed by Medecins du Monde on the basis of which they conducted their programmes. This model involved a focus on the emergency and the long-term medical care of vulnerable populations, untrammelled by rules and regulations, and the advocacy on behalf of these populations.

The sheer volume of aid, generated in the wake of the tsunami, involved a large number of stakeholders, with varying degrees of accountability and pressure to perform, as well as to be seen to perform, in a context where the political imperatives of speed were many (Hilhorst, 2003). Explanations of this avalanche of aid range from the huge media coverage of the event, to the fact that many of the countries affected by the tsunami were favourite tourist destinations; the fact that this disaster happened just after Christmas; and the fact that it was 'natural' rather than 'man made'. Jeevan Thiagaraja, Executive Director of the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies in Sri Lanka, stated that in response to the tsunami, at least US \$ 13.5 billion was pledged or donated for emergency relief and reconstruction: 44% from governments, 41% from private sources

¹⁶⁴ For an account of the issues surrounding development in Sri Lanka see Woost (1997).

and the remainder from International Financial Institutions (these figures based on countries studied in the TEC Funding Response study).

The media representation of this disaster was dominated by the premise that the Third World, particularly its governments, needed help in a disaster situation because it was incompetent: “For the western news media the Third World is a place of natural and political disasters and not much else” (Fiske:1987:285). This construct was underpinned by the notion that assistance to tsunami-affected populations was best provided by NGOs who had the expertise and the capacity to do so.

Therefore, the media, both international and local, played a role in shaping relief interventions by framing the disaster in terms of a series of narratives: “Internationally, decisions with far reaching consequences for the intended recipients were based on political or public opinion considerations resulting from anecdotal coverage by the mass media. Coordinating agencies were often reluctant to encourage donors and actors to discontinue visible but unnecessary or counterproductive activities.” (Tsunami Evaluation Coalition: Thematic Evaluation Report).¹⁶⁵ The representation was that it was the poor, a homogeneous category, that had suffered and that it was the responsibility of both the state and the non-governmental sector to rehabilitate the poor.

Thus, through a particular representation of this disaster event, the media created a standard against which the performance of both the NGOs and the state was assessed. There was tremendous pressure on NGOs and the government to respond in particular ways, where the categories of ‘devastation’, ‘reconstruction’ and ‘need’ had been defined in a specific manner.¹⁶⁶ Out of several potential representations, one representation came to be constituted as the legitimate discourse of recovery. This related, particularly, to the re-settlement of tsunami victims in permanent housing. Thus, the partial representation of certain realities, to the exclusion of others, by the media, assisted NGOs in pursuing a discourse oriented towards the notion of success.

¹⁶⁵ Thematic Evaluation Report -- “The Role of Needs Assessment in the Tsunami Response” Tsunami Evaluation Coalition. www.tsunami-evaluation.org/THE+TEC+Thematic+Evaluations/needs. Accessed on 07/10/2006

¹⁶⁶ Source: www.asiamedia.ucla.edu; www.bbc.co.uk; www.cnn.com; www.skynews.co.uk; www.island.lk; www.dailynews.lk; www.sundaytimes.lk; www.sundayleader.lk Accessed 01/11/2006.

The communities along the south-western coast responded to the initiatives of these organisations in a diversity of ways. There was controversy over the principles of disbursement, as well as over the uniform applicability of these initiatives.

In this chapter, therefore, I am concerned with the way in which the resources which flowed into Sinhapura, through non-governmental means, had implications for social position as well as for the relationship between the landside and the seaside. I am also concerned with the way in which these resources were viewed by the community in terms of ideas about the gift, accountability, justice and legitimacy.

In the rest of the chapter I describe the programmes of NGOs in the south-western region, in Sinhapura in particular, and the responses at the local level. Then I go on to draw out the implications of these programmes for Sinhapura.

This situation can be contrasted with the north and the east of Sri Lanka, where the tsunami affected a population in the midst of a civil war. Here, in addition to the state and the NGOs there was another actor on the stage: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The issues that emanated from the interaction of these three actors have been comprehensively discussed by, for instance, de Alwis & Hedman (2009).

The NGO Programmes on the South-western Coast

Overview of the Region

This section is an overview of the relief programmes of NGOs, in the south-western region, in order to contextualise the specific programmes in Sinhapura.¹⁶⁷

The programmes of NGOs had a greater variety than those of the state. However, they were not uniformly implemented in the manner of the state programmes -- i.e., not every organisation worked in every tsunami-affected district. Moreover, the focus on

¹⁶⁷ This information regarding the programmes of organisations in Sri Lanka was gleaned from interviews with officials of the relevant NGOs, in Colombo and Galle, as well as observation of the programmes in operation, between Panadura and Hambanthota, both during my period as Co-ordinator of the Trust in 2005 and 2006 as well as during my spell of fieldwork in 2007-2008. They were: members of local societies of NGOs; informant group sessions with members both from the same society and across societies in Sinhapura; the managers of the regional offices of these organizations and officials in the Colombo office; the Urban Development Authority (UDA); the Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB); the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA); the Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA); NGOs and UN Organizations based in Colombo with a broad based activity landscape (IFAD, Oxfam, MercyCorps, FAO, GTZ, IUCN, ADB, World Vision, Red Cross, the Asia Foundation, Caritas, CARE International).

some issues, such as women's particular medical and hygiene needs, was marginal (de Silva, 2006).¹⁶⁸

In the immediate aftermath, emergency relief -- food, clothing and shelter -- was the main focus on the south-western coast with a concomitant concern for health and nutrition, in terms of safe drinking water and access to good sanitary services. Among the principal organisations involved in this relief effort were OXFAM, specialising in immediate disaster relief, World Vision, with a focus on temporary shelter, and MercyCorps encompassing both these elements of relief. The conduit between NGOs and affected communities were local level organisations, local government politicians and tourist guides (Solomon, 2007; Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2007).

Once the phase of emergency relief was over and the affected populations had been housed either in tents or in temporary structures, it was household goods which were found to be in short supply. Many NGOs provided packages containing mattresses, blankets, linen, clothing, bottled water, non-perishable food items, mosquito nets, and kitchen utensils. Some were culturally appropriate while others, such as blankets, were not (Mulligan & Shaw, 2011).

The concern with livelihoods was the focus thereafter. MercyCorps and World Vision conducted cash-for-work programmes as a component of their livelihoods programme. OXFAM supported the coir industry in the southern district of Matara and assisted agriculture in the Hambanthota District by helping, for instance, to desalinate fields of cultivation which had been flooded by tsunami waters. The Post Tsunami Livelihood Support and Partnership Programme (PTLSPP) of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) facilitated the regeneration of the artisanal fisheries industry; promoted mechanized craft; and, in liaison with the Ceylon Fisheries Harbours Corporation (CFHC), assisted the construction of anchorages and landing sites in Suduwella, in the Matara District. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) liaised between donors and the Ministry of Fisheries in the regeneration of the fisheries

¹⁶⁸ de Silva (2006) states that if not for local organization like the Tsunami Women's Fund, which was established to cater to women's particular needs, women would have been, more or less, ignored by government authorities and NGOs.

industry, specifically in the distribution of craft. In the midst of these efforts to resuscitate livelihoods, however, there was little support for the commercial sector, by NGOs, on the basis that banks and insurance companies were there for this purpose.

The government repaired the railways and the major roads and bridges. There were, however, minor ones which were important to local communities, which were of low priority for the state. Some UN organisations, such as IFAD and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in liaison with local government institutions, effected these necessary repairs on the south-western coast. They were also involved in the replacement of equipment and furniture as well as the repair of buildings. IFAD, for instance, assisted the Department of Fisheries to repair its damaged buildings in Galle. The UNDP replaced the fuel facility in the Galle harbour, managed by the Galle District Fisheries Co-operative, which was completely destroyed.

Housing soon became the dominant discourse of NGOs, often at the expense of livelihoods. In Chapter 4, I have discussed the state perspective on housing and the partnership with NGOs in the construction of housing.¹⁶⁹ The houses were built by church organisations; a variety of NGOs, both international and local; commercial organisations; and, ad hoc organisations such as the Sri Lanka Minnesota Friendship Society. One of the issues that NGOs faced, especially in the construction of ‘home owner driven housing schemes’, was the problem of collusion between the field workers of NGOs and the contractors, the former certifying the poor quality work of the other. One organisation told me that they had to terminate the employment of several employees of their housing division, because of malpractices of this nature.

Education was the other issue upon which the greatest efforts of NGOs was placed. The Caritas Sed Galle ‘back to school’ project, for instance, provided children with temporary classrooms, furniture, uniforms and stationary. The construction of pre-schools was the most common of the education-related initiatives.

Then there were more long-term programmes such as those concerned with disaster management and gender development. The Red Cross organised trainings in disaster management. The Post Tsunami Coastal Rehabilitation and Resource Management

¹⁶⁹ The only construction of permanent housing by an NGO in Sinhapura was the 4 houses which were constructed by Red Cross on the seaside, as described in Chapter 4.

Programme (PTCRRMP) of IFAD, in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries, the National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA) and the Coast Conservation Department (CCD), was concerned with community-based coastal resource management. Other long term programmes such as the support by the FAO of landing sites were designed to encourage the better handling of fish for export.

These were some of the main programmes implemented in the south-western region by NGOs, both local and international. Not all of these programmes were implemented in Sinhapura. The significance of this description is that it contextualises the relief interventions which were implemented in Sinhapura.

Overview of Sinhapura

NGOs were not involved in the initial problem that Sinhapura faced, which was a scarcity of food.¹⁷⁰ Temporary shelter in Sinhapura has already been mentioned in the previous chapter. The tents where people were initially housed were provided by organisations such as World Vision, before the construction of transitional housing in the village.

Within a week of the tsunami, a procession of vehicles, belonging to NGOs and to commercial organisations, passed through Sinhapura distributing packages with a variety of household goods.¹⁷¹ They came from Colombo and were headed towards Galle, Matara and Hambanthota. These packages were distributed with little discrimination. My research assistant's brother, who was studying for his O' Level examination, received five school bags suitable for a child attending pre-school. Although tsunami debris had not contaminated the sources of drinking water in Sinhapura, many relief agencies distributed bottles and barrels of mineral water. Fifteen

¹⁷⁰ It is the surrounding communities, the temple and the Trust which played a critical role in food relief.

¹⁷¹ The following gave aid to Sinhapura: the Coastal Fisheries and Industries Trust (COFIT); the Arthacharya Trust; the Siyath Foundation; the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Galle District; the Southern Fisheries Organisation; World Vision; Caritas Sed Galle; St. Aloysius Church, Kaluwella; the Dutch Church, Galle; the Salvation Army, Hikkaduwa; Holy Trinity Church, Patuwatha; the German Technical Corporation (GTZ); the Asia Foundation; individuals both foreign and local; local government politicians; UNICEF; Red Cross; Neil Marine Company; Bank of Ceylon; Rupavahini Corporation.

bicycles, given by a church in the interior, were distributed to the friends and supporters of a member of the congregation, resident in Sinhapura.

Amongst those that stood on the roadside, there was intense competition to collect as many packages as possible. Some of these people were from the landside of Sinhapura as well as from the interior of the country, as some of my informants informed me. The residents of Sinhapura felt that those from the interior were undeserving recipients.

Some Sinhapura residents were unwilling to stand on the road waiting for these handouts, as they saw this as having a negative impact on their social position:

“Hinganna vage pare hitiya hekida apita?” (Can we stand on the road like beggars?)

Gunasena, my research assistant's father, told me that he would not permit his four children to 'run after' (*badu pitipasse duwanna*) the NGO vans driving along the coastline handing out packages of goods. He was concerned with maintaining his position as an 'upright' citizen in the community; one who had been prominent in Communist Party politics in the 1960s and 1970s when the Communist Party dominated local government politics in the region. He was scornful of those who were constantly on the lookout for hand-outs. He was also conscious of his daughter's forthcoming marriage and the necessity to maintain a *vadagath* position, in this context.

Charlotte, the teacher, is another person who explained to me that she could not pursue aid, aggressively, in the way of the *unavasara* and some of the fishing households, for the reason that her social position in the community did not permit her to do so.

Teaching in the Sinhapura school and living nearby, Charlotte was highly involved with the school and its students. She felt that had she 'greedily' pursued tsunami aid, in full view of the community, her standing as a teacher -- a repository of the moral universe -- would have been permanently damaged. Thus, for her, the preservation of social position was more important than the material goods she might have received from NGOs. Another teacher, Vinitha, echoed these sentiments as did Bernard and Wilbert, both of whom belonged to the 'old' families in Sinhapura. These families have lost much of the material base of their social standing, but continue to be respected for their past.

The restoration of Sinhapura's fishing fleet was a multi-pronged effort. The government's marginal role in this has already been described in the last chapter. The part played by the Coastal Fisheries and Industries Trust (referred to hereafter in this Chapter as the Trust), will be described later on in this chapter. My concern, here, is with the way in which other NGOs and philanthropic individuals, mostly foreign nationals, contributed to this reconstruction effort.

Some of the smaller NGOs gave a few boats and nets, operating through a local broker, often a tourist guide, concentrated on a particular neighbourhood of the village. Suneetha, the Sinhapura fish auctioneer and a tourist guide, was such a broker who received a commission for identifying recipients from the ad hoc organisations mentioned above as well as from foreign nationals who had, as tourists, been holidaying in the area. Three of his nominees received funds to repair their boats; another received a new boat; and another, according to my informants, who had never had a boat, received one nevertheless. What Suneetha told me was that he had played the role of broker out of the goodness of his heart: "*Game minissu amaruwata watunama udaw karanna onene.*" (When people in the village fall into difficulty one has to help them.). He did not mention the commission that he had received. My informants told me that his role as a broker of international finance, through his contacts with former tourists from Germany and Sweden, proved financially lucrative to him.

Duminda was a crewman who received a *wallam* from a German national. He told me that this foreign national had met him on the High Street, begun to converse with him, at random and had, eventually, offered cash to help stock his mother, Lalitha's vegetable shop. Duminda had refused, as he told me, on the basis that his mother's shop was stocked at the time. When Duminda explained that he was working as a crew member in the fishing industry the German national had offered to buy him a *wallam*. Duminda accepted. He received a *wallam* and nets worth approximately Rs. 800,000/-. He told me that he had to buy the engine, himself, which he did by pawning his wife's gold jewellery. He bought it second-hand paying Rs. 75,000/-, from someone who had received it as a gift. This was approximately half the cost of an engine, of that horsepower strength, in 2005. Duminda's position was that the community had suffered great losses which were being made good in diverse ways, and that what he had received was his share of this entitlement.

William was an entrepreneur, from the next village, with various interests in the tourist industry, who acted as a broker between foreign money and those affected by the tsunami. He set up a boat construction and repair yard with funds received from foreign donors. Susith's *wallam* was swallowed up by the tsunami waves. The arrangement was made by an organisation to pay William to construct a *wallam* for Susith at his boatyard.¹⁷² There was another boatyard in a village somewhat to the interior, which had been patronised by the Sinhapura fishermen before the tsunami. It is these two boatyards which replaced, through construction, the destroyed fishing fleet of Sinhapura. The Navy and Cey-Nor boatyards, of a temporary nature, attended to the repair of engines.

Asanka was a crewman who was also involved in the tourist industry. Through his contacts in the tourist industry he was able to attract foreign money into Sinhapura, directed towards the fishing industry. He expected a 20% commission for providing this service. Eventually, a foreign national provided him with the means to buy land and construct a house in the interior. He told me that this was in recognition of his liaison role. His tsunami-affected clients viewed this with great disapprobation. Brokers such as William, Suneetha and Asanka mediated the flow of finance between external sources and Sinhapura.

As far as the role of NGOs and foreign individuals was concerned, in relation to the gifts of boats and engines, the criticism by the large majority of people in the village was that the arbitrary nature of disbursement meant that the wrong people received boats and help with repairs, by virtue of a connection to a broker or by being in the right place at the right time. Furthermore, there was the criticism that at no stage was a census taken -- either by the state or by any organisation -- in which the ownership of boats, before the tsunami, was properly enumerated, the losses identified and a scheme drawn up for making good these losses. The Fisheries Inspector had a list of boats destroyed. However, according to him, donors rarely consulted this list when making their donations. It would appear that they had little faith in the integrity of the Fisheries

¹⁷² In 2006 when the repair and construction of boats had gone back to pre-tsunami levels, William converted the boatyard into a tourist guest resort. Amongst his other entrepreneurial activities, he runs this venture.

Inspector's list. While the impression in Sinhapura was that many organisations and foreign nationals walking about the village gave boats indiscriminately, and plentifully, when I updated the survey conducted by the Trust in 2005, in 2008, the final increase in the number of craft, pre-tsunami to post-tsunami, appeared to be only 20%.

Microfinance

In the period after the tsunami Sinhapura required capital and credit. In a situation where income was seriously disrupted, houses and boats had to be repaired or substantially rebuilt; businesses had to be resuscitated; and, education had to be pursued. The demand for microfinance increased several fold, across a wide cross-section of the community. The opportunity for those who provided this type of finance also expanded.

There were 7 microfinance organisations operating in Sinhapura at the time of the tsunami. They provided loans for small and medium enterprises, housing, education, and cottage crafts. Soon after the disaster, new microfinance organisations commenced operations in the community and their number increased to 15. Those who were already in microfinance expanded their activity. Where, previously, 40% of the community were clients of these organisations, the figure soon rose to 60%.¹⁷³ A long established organisation, for instance, instituted a loan called the *Sahana Naya* (relief loan) of Rs. 25,000/- at an interest of 6% per annum. There was a six month grace period on repayment and the individual could take two years to pay it back. This proved to be a very popular loan.

With these microfinance organisations coming into the village the borrowing life of the community expanded. Shirani who was already a member of the existing 7 organisations came to be a member of 12 microfinance organisations. She took loans from some to pay others; she also used the capital, so acquired, for money-lending and other credit ventures such as the *seettu*. There were several others whose reach was not as extensive, but who followed the same principle of making external capital 'work' for them. Thus, the availability of microfinance, on a scale hitherto unknown to this community, had an impact on the internal commerce of Sinhapura.

¹⁷³ Source: Survey conducted by the Trust as well as my own update of the survey in 2007.

Inevitably, with many microfinance organisations and a large number of people wanting credit, a situation of considerable competition was created. Individuals in the community were competing for credit and for the control of the organisations, while the organisations, themselves, were competing for clients. There had been people in the village who had acted as the propagandists for the older microfinance organisations before the tsunami. They were involved in the selection of clients and were responsible for repayments. They were, by virtue of this role, important in the credit life of the community. When the new organisations began to operate in Sinhapura, after the tsunami, new people presented themselves as those who were capable of playing this role and who would, therefore, be useful to the microfinance organisations. This situation arose from the allegations of people like Raneer who stated that after the tsunami, the management committee of some organisations gave loans to their 'clients', and withheld them from people who were equally, if not more, deserving. These organisations were seen as being in the control of a small clique. At this point, Raneer and others took the initiative, when new organisations visited the village, exploring the possibility of commencing microfinance societies in the village. They appropriated to themselves the societies which were, eventually, established. In a short time, therefore, not only had the village a large number of microfinance organisations, there were several individuals, such as Raneer, who were members of more than one society. Thus, individuals in Raneer's network, neighbours and kin, also became clients of these new organisations. Several networks of the community -- those of neighbourhood and kin - - were utilised in establishing the clientele of these new organisations.

This expansion in the activity of microfinance to meet high demand, in a disaster situation, and the speed at which it happened, had its own problems. The recruitment of clients was not done with the same scrutiny as before, as far as the assessment of the ability of repayment was concerned. Supervision of the local branch of the microfinance society by the regional one, and even the headquarters in Colombo, was cursory. In this context, deviation from correct procedure took place, sometimes in the form of embezzlement. There was an episode at a regional office of an organisation where the administrative staff absconded with a large percentage of the repayments of clients, including those of Sinhapura. The field workers of another large organisation were found to be, literally, snatching jewellery off female clients if they could not pay their

weekly instalment. While people appreciated the expanded access to capital they did not appreciate the high interest rates -- in the case of one organisation as high as 34%.

The other issue that I observed was the lack of transparency which some of these organisations exhibited in their operation. One of my informants, Nadika, told me that in the case of one microfinance organisation, all the documentation, except for the passbook detailing the loan and the interest paid, was held by the organisation. Nadika was not permitted to retain a copy of any of these documents. When I met the manager of this organisation in Galle, I asked to see the loan application form. He refused saying that the policy was to show these forms to loan applicants alone. Another organisation, with its regional office in Hikkaduwa, had their Vision and Mission Statements printed in large font on the wall in the reception. While I was waiting to meet the manager I wrote it down. The accountant who was seated nearby watched me with suspicion and seemed highly agitated all the while that I was writing. My impression was that he seemed worried that I was taking down classified, privileged information which might be used to 'indict' the organisation in the future; whereas, this was information which was, in fact, in the public domain. The manager whom I eventually met, was very young -- much younger than some of the workers in the office -- and seemed unaware of these under-currents. She was a recent graduate and was quite forthcoming about the organisation, unlike the accountant, who was obviously more experienced and, therefore, wary.

In this context, microfinance moved in the direction of commercial lending, where capital was lent at a high interest, and began to lose its humanitarian emphasis. Microfinance organisations filled the lacuna for capital in these tsunami-affected communities, and made a profit in the process. The manager of a microfinance organisation told me that they had so much capital from the payment of interest that they could give the loans ten times over. This was, however, achieved at some cost. Increasingly, local communities began to see microfinance organisations not as a charitable concern but as a commercial venture. The result was feelings of aggression and hostility to these organisations. The reaction to this was that microfinance organisations established the Lanka Microfinance Practitioners' Network. The idea was that this body would protect these organisations from the allegations of extraction, bullying and coercion. There is no mechanism, however, to protect the recipients of

microfinance or to regulate the industry in a consistent manner, as these organisations come under various legislative enactments and are regulated, therefore, by different government authorities.¹⁷⁴

Apart from the organisations and individuals which assisted Sinhapura, detailed above, there were a few organisations which conducted very specific programmes which had a significant impact on the community. The following sections focus on these organisations and the ways in which they affected the social processes of the community, by giving some individuals and households the opportunity for accelerated social mobility.

The Coastal Fisheries and Industries Trust

The context in which the Trust commenced its work in Sinhapura has been described at some length in the Introduction to this thesis.¹⁷⁵ To recapitulate, our interaction with Sinhapura led my parents and myself to the recognition that there were many different types of households, with varying levels of income, each of which had been affected by the tsunami in its own way. This showed us that it was the household and not the community, as a whole, which should be the focus of reconstruction and that the first step of this recovery should be the resuscitation of livelihoods. Furthermore, the household was the institution (the social unit) in the community, which made requests for assistance from the Trust.

Thus, the Trust differed from the other organisations providing relief in this region, in that the focus was on one community and the differential needs of each household, in that community. The principle regarding the disbursement of funds, which was made transparent to the community very early on by the Trustees, was, that a single household would be helped to the point where it had a stable means of income.

Immediately after the tsunami the Trust focused on the fishing fleet, the High Street businesses and the coir industry. These activities were supported by the ongoing research of the Trust. The basic household survey was deepened in two ways.¹⁷⁶ The

¹⁷⁴ A specific Microfinance Act has been in the pipeline but has not yet, as at 2015, become law.

¹⁷⁵ In terms of the broad categories used in this thesis I treat the Trust as an NGO.

¹⁷⁶ Please refer the Introductory Chapter for the circumstances surrounding the household survey.

first, was that information on the household was expanded through interviews. The second, was that the information on households led to the exploration of various institutions such as the kin group and the neighbourhood, which were critical in the life of the community, through informant group sessions. This developed into a substantial corpus of data which, as the activities continued, contributed to the taking of day-to-day decisions.

The judgement concerning the basis of need was the province of the Trustees. This judgement of who was genuine and who was not was mediated, initially, by those known to the Trustees in village, before the information from the survey and wider interactions with the community began to yield information.

Sometimes the urgency of the situation were such that households had to be assisted even though basic information about the households had not, yet, been gathered. This created tension between the Trust the community and the investigators. The investigators were accused of doing the job forgetting their allegiance to the village, in a situation where their influence with the Trustees could have been used to swing decisions in favour of kin or neighbours. They were positioned as insiders and outsiders, by virtues of their investigative role. On one occasion when they visited a particular household, at the end of the day, those in the neighbouring household thought that this was a deliberate attempt to exclude them from the survey. Some pacification of both the household and the investigators, by the Trustees became necessary. At one stage the Trustees found that the connection with the caretakers of the beach land was being exploited.

The tsunami struck Sinhapura at the height of the fishing season. Out of 60 *wallams* 8 were completely destroyed, with the wrecks plainly visible. There were others which disappeared and were presumed to be sunk. All the others suffered damage in varying degrees: some to the hull, some to the engine and many to both. The repair centres established by the Navy and Cey-Nor operated with limited financial resources. Within two weeks of the tsunami they had exhausted their capacities and closed. There was William's boatyard, concerned with the repair and construction of fibreglass *wallams*, and Lucky's engine repair centre in Kotigama. However, these were not charitable institutions and their services had to be paid for.

It was in this context that the Trust came to play a role in the repair of hulls and engines. When a request for assistance, as regards the fishing industry, was made to the Trust the decision to help was made in terms of whether the *wallam* would be put back to sea and provide an income to eight crewmen. The Trust did not repair more than one engine or *wallam* belonging to the same individual, although numerous such requests were received. The rationale was that given the limited resources of the Trust once an individual had one boat in working order, his household and that of his crew had an income and its survival was no longer a matter for immediate concern. As far as nets were concerned small ones were distributed to 8 river fishermen. The larger nets used in sea fishing were too costly for the Trust to fund.¹⁷⁷

To give a few examples, Premasiri's engine, repaired by the Cey-Nor centre, stalled while at sea. The Trust provided the assistance to have the engine overhauled by Lucky. Cleaning this engine, in 2005, cost Rs. 17,000/- which was a large sum of money in village terms. In a similar manner, Jayatissa's engine was rendered seaworthy. The hull of Rohan's *wallam* needed extensive repair. It was lying in William's boatyard where the repair was delayed due to lack of funds. On one of the frequent visits to the boatyard the Trustees saw the damaged boat. Upon investigation it was agreed to fund the repair. William, meanwhile, was constantly telling the Trustees that the Trust was being defrauded by the *wallam* owners because they were getting funds from other sources as well for the repair: "*Api degolla avankava ape vade karanawa. Namuth me minissu eka vedata depolakin mudal laba gannawa.*" (We are doing our job honestly but these people are getting funds from two sources for the same job).

The Trust helped with the repair of 35 *wallams* and, in this way, helped approximately 250 households to re-establish their sources of income.

Apart from conducting repairs, the Trust distributed 26 outrigger canoes (non-mechanized artisanal craft) on 11 April 2005. 12 canoes were manufactured by a local craftsman from a small village in the interior, recommended by the fishermen, and paid for by the Trust. The remaining 14 were donated to the Trust by AdoptSriLanka.¹⁷⁸ The older fishermen came forward with the suggestion that until all *wallams* were fully operational, canoe fishing could provide an alternative source of income. As far as the

¹⁷⁷ Some of the large NGOs funded the nets.

¹⁷⁸ AdoptSriLanka was an NGO started by Geoffrey Dobbs, a British National resident in Sri Lanka, in the aftermath of the tsunami, to assist disaster-affected communities.

Trust was concerned, this made sense. The right recipients then became the issue. The choice of 26 individuals from a much larger pool of displaced crew members presented a great challenge. At one point it seemed an impossible task because all the claims for canoes seemed justified. To be eligible for a canoe the individual in question had to have lost his mode of income, and had to be a skilled canoeist. These two criteria were the basis for the disbursement of the canoes. One of the problems was that not every crew member was skilful at handling a canoe. However, all those who made application for a canoe were insistent that they had the required skill. There were many sessions with the group that was advising the Trust: the Chairman of the Fisheries Co-operative Society; a prominent High Street trader who was the brother of our care-taker; and, two young, crew members who were experienced canoeists. The discussion revolved around the question of skill regarding the handling of a canoe and involved many debates, including some disagreement, as to who was the most eligible. Finally, a consensus was reached although not everyone was satisfied. On the day when the canoes were disbursed those who did not receive one, expressed their dissatisfaction. In the event, not all of the recipients made the proper use of the canoe. Some months later it was discovered that 7 had been sold. Others were quick to point out that this had been the intention of those recipients all along. On the other hand, Karunadasa, used his canoe most productively. He landed a 10 kg seer fish within two days of receiving the canoe which was a very unusual catch for inshore fishing.

The High Street Traders lost stock, equipment and cash. Some were also owners of *wallams* which were either destroyed or damaged. They came to the Trust seeking capital to restart their businesses.

Sushila, who ran the eating house, told me that she was very grateful for the grant of Rs. 10,000/- which she received from the Trust as she had been unable to get funding from the state or any other organisation. She restarted the eating house, in a small way, with four tables and sixteen chairs which she received from an NGO. Eventually, she received display cabinets and all the other equipment necessary for her business from various NGOs. In the first few weeks after the tsunami, however, her perception was that there was no one to assist her but the Trust: “*Ayathanaye udawwa naththan, e avasthavedi apata harenda athak naha.*” (We had nobody to turn to in our hour of need except the Trust).

Dinesh had a beauty salon, a music centre and a video cassette rental on the High Street, all of which he told me were yielding an income which, in his opinion, was a good one. He had started these ventures with his earnings from six years of employment in Saudi Arabia. Through the Trust he received Rs. 12,000/- worth of equipment from a Colombo beauty salon and was able, once the premises had been cleaned, to start this business again. After a while, he restarted the video cassette rental through the assistance from other organisations.

The more prosperous of the High Street traders were reluctant to come to the Trust for assistance. It is only after the livelihoods programme was well established and many people had sought assistance that these individuals came to the Trust. They stated that they had felt that coming to the Trust meant a compromise of their social position. Wijepala Mudalali, for instance, told me that it would be a matter of shame for him and his family -- not merely his nuclear family but his brothers as well, who were all prominent businessmen in the community -- had he queued for aid, like a poor man, since he had enjoyed a superior social position in the community. Wijepala Mudalali contrasted himself with the *unawasara* (the beach dwellers whose homes were completely destroyed by the tsunami and who were in the temporary accommodation) who, in his perception, pursued every source of tsunami aid, whether they were entitled to it or not, and 'made a spectacle' of themselves. He requested, and received, a grant of Rs. 20,000/- from the Trust. He told me that he had lost about Rs. 3 million in the tsunami and that he was owed Rs. 500,000/- by the tourist resorts in Hikkaduwa for seafood which he had supplied.

The High Street traders had little in the way of savings, which they could draw upon, because all their capital had been invested in their businesses. Commercial lending institutions such as banks would not lend them capital as they had neither suitable collateral, nor a turnover that was high enough for the type of loan that they required. It was in these circumstances that the grants that the Trust was able to disburse, small though they were, became important.

The Trade Association comprising 37 members was established in the village under the aegis of the Trust, on 1 February 2005, in order to link up with various organisations and receive benefits, both in the way of training and direct assistance. It was the natural outcome of the feeling amongst the business people that neither the state nor the banks

were doing anything for the recovery of their businesses and that while NGOs had distributed packages of goods they were, by and large, not willing to help resuscitate businesses.

The Trust informed the Chamber of Commerce (Galle Branch) that the business people of Sinhapura were in dire need of help. At a meeting at the Trust premises in June 2005 the traders communicated their needs to the Chamber representative. Out of the 37 Trade Association members 13 received equipment to help their businesses, from an NGO, BBB, through the Chamber.¹⁷⁹ The items were disbursed in a staggered way during July and August, 2005.

The remaining 24 members of the Trade Association, who did not receive grants were resentful and could not understand the NGO's basis of the selection. They asserted that the Executive Committee of the Trade Association had influenced the Chamber and BBB to accrue the benefits to themselves and their supporters. There was particular hostility when it emerged that the secretary, Sampath (who ran a Communication Agency on the High Street), who had liaised with the Chamber on the behalf of the Association, had been invited to become a member of the Galle branch of the Chamber. This was seen as a great honour as membership was limited to the 'big' businessmen of the southern region. The wife of Bernard, a member, asked at a Trade Association meeting: "*eyata thiyana mona sudusukam nisada saamaajikathwaya thenda hadanne*"? (What qualifications does he have to be singled out for a membership offer?). It emerged, at a subsequent meeting, that those who had not received anything had sent a petition to the Chamber, stating that those who received assistance did not deserve it. Whereupon Sampath wrote a letter thanking the Chamber for facilitating the funding for the 13 recipients and requesting them, if possible, to assist the others as well. Sampath followed this up with a personal visit to the Executive Officer dealing with Sinhapura, in order as he told me, to neutralise the petition. During this visit Sampath became a member of the Chamber. The Trust, too, requested the Chamber to assist the other Trade Association members. The response of the Chamber, both to Sampath and to the Trust, was that BBB had certain criteria on the basis of which those businesses which

¹⁷⁹ When recounting the interactions between Sinhapura and specific organisations I shall anonymise them. BBB, CCC, DDD and EEE are the pseudonyms that I use for NGOs which conducted specific programmes in Sinhapura.

received assistance had been selected. The gambling centre on the High Street, for instance, did not come within the purview of these criteria. The Chamber informed the Trust that BBB did not, as a policy, reveal the basis of these criteria.

The Trust disbursed grants to 471 households in Sinhapura between January and September 2005. In terms of an evaluation study which was conducted in March 2006, the Trust established that 75% of the households which had been the recipients of grants had used them for the purpose intended. As far as the remaining 25% were concerned, there was some ambiguity: the grants may have been used for another purpose or they may have been acquired on a disingenuous basis. The information for the evaluation was gathered through interviews, with recipients, as well as informant group sessions. There was also follow up of individual recipients, on the basis of the original survey, by the local investigators. The data gathering here was similar to the survey, in that the Trustees had a discussion with the investigators at the end of the day, to arrive at the most accurate conclusion as far as a household was concerned.

With the tsunami, the coir activity in Sinhapura fell into disarray because the retting pits in the river which produced the coir yarn from coconut husks had been washed away.¹⁸⁰ The Trust arranged for coir to be transported from mills in areas unaffected by the tsunami in the deep south, about 90 kms from Sinhapura so that the women could continue to make coir rope. The income that the women received from the sale of the coir rope, though small, enabled them to keep the home fires burning during the critical, immediate post-tsunami period when the programmes of government and other assistance, were in an embryonic stage. Bennet's wife, for instance, was a keen worker of the coir enterprise as the *wallam* that Bennet crewed on was damaged and, therefore, he was without income. They had three children, one of whom refused to eat the traditional fare of rice and curry and demanded the far more expensive milk and biscuits. The middle men who bought the coir rope from the women of Sinhapura attempted to beat down the price while they were in difficulty after the tsunami. The Trust arranged with Charles P. Hayley Company, situated in Galle, to buy the coir rope of the Sinhapura women at Rs. 18, per kilogram, which was almost double the price paid by the middle men. The Trust also facilitated the donation of thirty coir machines to the women from AdoptSriLanka. This reinvigorated coir activity continued for a

¹⁸⁰ Please refer back to Chapter 1 for a description of the raw material and the mode of production of the coir industry.

couple of months and provided a steady income until other avenues became re-established.

While the main focus was livelihood regeneration the Trust found that as the organisation working intensively in this village it could not ignore the welfare needs. For example, Lalitha who had a vegetable shop on the High Street appeared one day at the Trust premises with highly swollen feet. The Trust arranged for her to be taken to the main teaching hospital in the south, the Karapitiya General. The doctors had said that she had an advanced kidney problem which, if not treated, would have proved fatal. Furthermore, two pregnant women who did not have the wherewithal to purchase everything that they required for their confinements, were helped by the Trust. The Trust also found that it had a liaison role to play, such as the instances where an individual was in a standoff with a commercial organisation, particularly insurance and finance companies. One of the Trustees, being a lawyer, intervened in several of these cases. For example, the repossession of Geetha's van, necessary for her tea business, was stayed and the terms of the repayment of her loan renegotiated. Similarly, the insurance payment for the repair of Rohan's three wheeler was expedited by the liaison with the insurance company. There were other activities that the Trust was involved in such as facilitating the attendance of the traders at a Trade Fair in Tangalle in October 2005; organising a craft evening for a group of visiting Australians; and, supporting initiatives in the arena of education.

As mentioned in the Introductory Chapter, 2006 saw a shift in emphasis in the work of the Trust. By the middle of 2006 the evaluation had been accomplished, and the reports submitted to the foreign and local donors. At this point the project might well have come to a close. However, those that the Trust interacted with closely demanded that it continue to be active in the community. Thus, in consultation with the community, the Trust devised a series of income earning projects, particularly for the women -- manufacture of candles, soap, *pappadams*, and dress making. 25 women were trained in the manufacture of candles by the staff of the Industrial Development Board (IDB). The necessary equipment was bought by the Trust which also located a buyer in Colombo who was a supplier to a chain of retail stores. The women produced between 80-100,000 candles per month. Two to three women acted as coordinators and the

production was kept going so long as there were orders.¹⁸¹ The women produced the candles in their homes using the moulds provided by the Trust and brought them to the Trust premises to be packed. The dozen or so regular workers earned an income which was a satisfactory addition to that of the household.

The demand for spoken English arose from the following circumstances. The aspiration in Sinhapura has been that its young people should acquire that knowledge of English - especially spoken -- which would secure for them lucrative employment in the wider marketplace of this country, particularly in the commercial sector. The acquisition of this skill was seen as one of the main requirements of current employability. The Trust instituted spoken English classes, primarily for adults. They were conducted by one of the Trustees during my fieldwork year (2007-2008). The student body ranged from a 12 year old school boy to a 65 year old grandmother. There was also the science teacher from the Sinhapura school, Charlotte, who was very keen to improve her English, and her 65 year old sister, Annette, who had handed over a successful garment business to her son and was now enjoying retirement, which included improving her English. The other students were a sprinkling of young men and women, on the threshold of employment, a few about to enter university, who were keen to improve their English. There were also three wheeler drivers who came when they could spare time from hires, and a merchant seaman, on shore leave.

As the relief organisation most active in Sinhapura, the Trust became a focal point for the release of frustration, anger and despair. This was particularly the case when requests for assistance had to be turned down by the Trust. There were allegations, by those disaffected that the Trust was being 'taken in' by fraudulent applications and that the disbursements were insufficient. There were, besides, those households which felt that they had a good case for assistance and demanded that they be investigated and interviewed. Conversely, there were those who felt that the whole business of research - of investigating households and their circumstances -- was a waste of time, which took away from the immediacy of the disbursement.

¹⁸¹ The orders stopped in 2010 when the buyer's orders ceased.

CCC

I now turn to another organisation, CCC. The Chamber of Commerce informed the Trade Association that a representative from CCC, an NGO, was interested in meeting the High Street traders of Sinhapura. A meeting was arranged by the Trust, in liaison with the Chamber, and it took place at the Trust premises in July 2005. When asked about their needs, by the representative of CCC, the traders requested aid to rebuild their businesses. The response was that as businesses could secure loans from banks there would be no funding of ongoing businesses. Then the representative asked for the other needs of the people. Kanchana, the owner of the store supplying spare parts for engines, rose to her feet and explained that her brother Lucky was going abroad and that she was taking over his engine repair centre as it would be bad for the fishermen if this centre ceased to exist. They would have to go to Aluthgama, further to the north of Sinhapura, or Galle for even the smallest of repairs. She said that finding a proper, stable mechanic had been a perennial problem for Lucky and that she wanted to train her elder son as the centre mechanic. Kanchana stated that she had applied to the Yamaha Company for training; she just needed the funds.

CCC investigated the issue, spoke to the Yamaha Company and then asked Kanchana to forward an estimate for the construction of the repair centre, on land next to the spare parts store, as well as one for the training of her elder son. Once they received the information, Kanchana was told that she would receive a grant of Rs. 1.5 million from CCC to fund this venture. A representative of CCC in Colombo, who spoke to me, stated that they had decided to assist Kanchana because she displayed initiative in developing her existing business. An important aspect was the fact that, if this repair centre folded up because Lucky had gone abroad, it would leave this whole stretch of coastline without this service. Thus, from the point of view of CCC, choosing one person to assist in Sinhapura was logical -- by doing so they were helping not just one individual but, potentially, a whole industry. Furthermore, as the representative stated, unlike Kanchana, the other business people had asked for capital without a specific scheme in mind. Kanchana told me that she was delighted with the situation, as it panned out, and that she did not feel at all defensive that she was the only person from the whole Trade Association to be helped by CCC. Nor was she concerned about the

fact that the grant was a very large sum, in village terms. She told me that she knew that others were envious of her good fortune and did not see why only she should be assisted. She stated that she had not done anything wrong. She had made her request and her application fitted the policy criteria of CCC. The construction was completed and the repair centre was opened, with some fanfare, in January 2006. The institution of this repair centre, next to the existing spare parts business, had a multiplier effect. The expansion of the volume of business was significant. Kanchana told me that she was very grateful to the Trust because it was through the Trust that the Chamber and, therefore, CCC came to Sinhapura.

DDD

DDD, an NGO, set up a Disaster Management and Environment society in the village in September 2005 with the stated objectives of community development; disaster preparedness, mitigation and management; and, tsunami warning. Committees were set up to deal with these various aspects and training was provided by DDD. Households were encouraged to keep all important documents in a 'tsunami bag', such that in an emergency they could run to safety carrying with them their most precious belongings. The performance of certain communal tasks such as recycling waste and sweeping the roads, was required of the members of this society. One of the visible activities, apart from the training programme, was the placement of bright green garbage bins at strategic points around the village for the recycling of waste. These were not a success. The bins were vandalised within a few days. Jayatissa said to me: "*meka apata sahenda amaru kalayak. Me vidiha vinoda katayuthu valata apata vela nehe*" (This is a very difficult time for us. We have no time for these frivolities.). Charlotte's comment was: "*Mee vyapruthiye vadagath vada kotasak tharuna pirisa gen balaporothisu venava namuth tharuna pirisata me avasthavedi karanna vadagath vada keepayak thiyanaawa. Gama naggala genima egollage vishesha vagakeemak.*" (In this project they expect young people to play an important part. However, at this time the community needs the young people to perform a whole lot of more important tasks. The rehabilitation of the village is their special responsibility.). Thus, a society which had started with much enthusiasm folded up, as attendance at meetings began to dwindle. As my informants told me, people did not have the time nor the interest for an activity from which they got no direct benefit when their lives were in such disarray.

EEE

While Sampath, the secretary of the Trade Association, was in Galle he happened to hear that an organisation, EEE, a religious one, was helping tsunami-affected businesses. He met them and they explained their scheme: the High Street traders should form into a group of 12 people and establish a savings society. Once the society had been established the members would receive an item of equipment, chosen by themselves, to support their businesses. Sampath told me that he had stated that the Sinhapura Trade Association had 37 members. The response of the organisation was that their rules specified 12 members. Thus, if Sinhapura wanted to be part of this scheme the society should have only this number. The Executive Committee of the Association informed their intimates and formed the society. They were told by EEE not to tell the other Trade Association members but to form the society in secret. When the EEE field worker was informed by the Executive Committee that secrecy would lead to problems in the future, he had over-ruled their concerns and said that the others could form their own societies later. I was told this subsequently by those who had been present.

The society was formed in May 2005. It was not divulged to the wider membership of the Trade Association nor to any of the Trustees. Weekly meetings and the savings continued. The 'carrot' for the saving was not the possibility of bigger loans from EEE, but the item of equipment. Furthermore, people had to do things to foster community feeling such as helping each other.

The goods were received towards the end of 2006, almost one and a half years after the society was started. During this long period people began to be very disillusioned with the organisation. There was concern as to whether the goods would, indeed, be forthcoming. With this confusion, the secret nature of the society began to falter. The field officer was at the receiving end of much of this dissatisfaction. He stalled, regarding the disbursement of the goods, to keep the society functional. The people of another village went even further. They went to the organisation's headquarters in Galle and told the director that if they did not receive the goods, immediately, they would end the society.

The goods had to be bought from a particular store in Galle with which EEE had come to an arrangement. When Nadika, who ran a Communications Agency on the High

Street, complained to the field officer that the goods in the store were inferior, and that she would like to purchase her item from another store, he replied that there was nothing he could do as the decision had been taken by the Accounts Department of EEE.

After the 12 society members had received their items -- fax machines, refrigerators and so on -- the officials of the organisation came to a Trade Association meeting and publicly announced that a 12 member society had been formed, that a programme of savings had been conducted, and that goods to assist their businesses had been received. They invited the remaining members of the Trade Association to do the same. There was a lecture on community togetherness, the journey towards sustainability and the importance of activities such as *shramadana* (voluntary work towards a community purpose). The Trade Association members were polite to the officials but after they had left they expressed their hostility. The original 12 members had to endure much criticism for the fact that they had been secretive about their society. This became a source of great tension within the Trade Association. There were accusations of inappropriate conduct and lack of transparency on the part of the Executive Committee, as well as the illegitimate improvement of social position by the members. Eventually, the remaining members of the Association did form into two societies. They received their goods in mid-2007. By this time cumulative strains had taken its toll on the Trade Association which had virtually disintegrated.

I met the director of EEE, in June 2008, to discuss the programme in Sinhapura. He asserted that there were no problems with any of the programmes and denied that there had been any dissatisfaction amongst the recipients. I stated that I had heard differently from the people of Sinhapura. Whereupon, he got the current field worker -- the one who had dealt with Sinhapura from 2005 to 2007 had left the organisation -- to show me a printout of all the recipients, i.e., all 37 seven members of the Trade Association. The field worker, too, stated that there had been no problems and that I had been misinformed. She stated that the society in Sinhapura had had a meeting the previous month and had sent a report. Both denied that the original 12 members of the first society were dissatisfied about the time that it had taken for them to receive the goods. They denied, too, that the other members of the Trade Association had been resentful about the secrecy with which the first society had been formed. As the officials of EEE

repudiated any knowledge of the entire episode, I was not able to have any sort of a discussion with EEE about the implications of their action for the Trade Association. I was also not able to ask them how they reconciled what had happened in Sinhapura, with their stated goal of developing community organisations.

The Implications of the Programmes of NGO

In the section above I have described the relief efforts of NGOs in Sinhapura and the region. I now comment on the various issues emerging out of the interaction between the community -- individuals and households -- and these organisations.

In Sinhapura there were households which received aid from NGOs to compensate them for the losses that they had suffered. However, there were also households which were compensated for losses not incurred. Both types of households were found amongst all the categories identified in Chapter 3.

The multi-day boat owners received little assistance from the non-governmental sector. The *wallam* owners received aid from the Trust, from some NGOs in the form of packages and boats, and from private individuals. However, this was of a completely random nature. Crew members, too, were helped by these sources. Initially, the High Street traders were not the recipients of aid from the wider, non-governmental sector. They were assisted by the Trust in the immediate post-tsunami period in resuscitating their businesses. The help from NGOs began to flow in only when it became clear that banks and other commercial organisations would not provide assistance due to the issue of collateral. Furthermore, they benefited from the expansion of microfinance in the village, in the aftermath of the tsunami. Service providers and those externally employed received the packages of goods and were also able to access the expanded microfinance enterprise. Many of my informants stated that the *unavasara* received a large number of packages from NGOs, as they pursued every such assistance available in the most diligent manner. Their greatest benefactor, however, remained the state. As far as the *unavasara* were concerned, there was no question of excess -- the assistance was available and they were in need.

In Sinhapura, some of the tsunami-affected individuals and households accepted aid from NGOs, framed as a gift, and the position of subordination and the necessity of reciprocity (gratitude) that a gift implies (Stirrat & Henkel, 1997; Mauss, 1990; Parry, 1986). As Stirrat and Henkel put it “...the act of receiving is hedged with conditionality at best, while at worst the gift may become a form of patronage and a means of control.” (Stirrat & Henkel:1997:72). The *unavasara* households are an example of this attitude.

Others attempted to transform relief aid from the frame of the gift into one of entitlement. These were people who took the position that, as those who had suffered greatly, they were legitimately entitled to compensation, from non-governmental sources, from a moral point of view. Duminda who received a *wallam* and engine from a foreign national is an example of this attitude. While they were determined to benefit from these organisations, they did not want to compromise their social position within the community by being seen as the recipients of patronage. The denial of the necessity for reciprocity, in the form of gratitude, was central here. Thus, they positioned themselves not as recipients of a gift, but as those entitled to compensation and, in the process, attempted to redefine the dynamic of relief aid in terms of an entitlements framework. This situation is illustrated by the Country Representative of an international NGO who found many people in Sinhapura lacking in those expressions of gratitude which he felt were due to his organisation. Korf's (2007) point that aid should be framed not as a gift, which requires the reciprocity of gratitude and reinforces the position of 'victim', but as an entitlement, which implies independence and dignity, resonates with the position taken by some of those in Sinhapura.

Another section of the community saw the acceptance of aid as the acceptance of a position of subordination, vis-à-vis external organisations, and were concerned about the implications of this for their social position in Sinhapura. Gunasena and Charlotte, for instance, viewed the accumulation of economic capital, from NGOs, as being at the expense of another type of capital -- social standing, respect and honour -- and refused to accept any assistance from these organisations. Some individuals, however, such as Wijepala Mudalali, were forced by the imperatives of their economic circumstances to accept such assistance but they did so after a struggle with themselves, and this acceptance remained a constant source of tension.

There were many foreign nationals in Sri Lanka at the time of the tsunami, on vacation in the holiday resorts, who saw the devastation in the coastal areas and felt morally compelled to assist these communities. In Sinhapura, donations made at the time of the tsunami did not lead to a long-term relationship between a foreign donor and a local recipient. To this extent, these donations can be regarded as a disinterested gift. This can be contrasted with a large project in Galle where disinterested gifts came to be transformed into ongoing relationships, involving reciprocity, as the donors became far more involved in the community, than they had originally intended. This involvement was perceived by those who managed the project, locally, as necessary for ensuring that these gifts were successfully utilised (Hollenbach, 2013).

In many instances, the intermediary who functioned as the broker between the foreign donor and recipient was the tourist guide. Every such gift was accompanied by a sizeable commission to the broker, from the recipient, according to my informants. Here, the relationship of reciprocity was not with the donor but with the broker. Expecting a commission for the brokerage of tsunami finance, incurred much censure in the village. This was seen, in the community, as the morally reprehensible act of making money out of people's misery. Although the brokers attempted to keep these material transactions under a veil of secrecy, this was not always possible. From the brokers' point of view they, too, had lost their source of income. The hotels were damaged and tourist arrivals into the country dropped. In these circumstances, they felt that liaising between foreign donors and the local community was an action worth some material reward.

The question of ineligible recipients, in the context of relief aid, was a source of much debate. Those who sold goods that they obtained, in a disingenuous manner, and used the capital to repay loans, buy luxury consumer goods etc. were viewed with great disapprobation. The concern was that capital accumulated in this way was used to improve the resource position of the household, in an unjust manner. In this context, the view of the large majority of the community, particularly those whose losses were heavy and who did not benefit from assistance, was that the organisations should be held accountable for the indiscriminate way in which they distributed assistance. Anything beyond legitimate compensation was seen as indefensible. The view in the

community was that legitimate compensation, in this sense, was the restoration of what had been lost, to the poorer sections of the village.

In the case of the state the perception was that those who received benefits, which were not justified, did so because of the inefficiency and corruption of state officials. The perception, as far as NGOs were concerned, was that policy, design and implementation all contributed to the inequitable distribution of resources to affected populations.

There were many people who felt that they were deserving of assistance and that it was because of external policy imperatives that they were not considered suitable recipients. BBB, CCC and EEE were seen as operating, very much, on the basis of external policy criteria rather than of local need. BBB made the disbursement to some members of the Trade Association, and not to others, as stated, on the basis of their policy imperatives. It was not on the basis of need, after a degree of consultation with the community. In the case of CCC their initial premise -- the assumption that High Street traders would receive help from commercial institutions -- turned out to be wrong. Therefore, they ignored the plainly articulated needs of the traders of this community. They helped one person, Kanchana, because her scheme fitted into their policy and also because they wished to provide a whole region with a service. In this, they did not take into account the implications of their actions which was that a situation of envy and conflict was created, because the other traders felt that, with so many of them in dire need, it was inequitable for such a large capital sum to be concentrated on one person.

As far as EEE was concerned, the needs of the community had little bearing on the decision regarding the implementation of the programme in Sinhapura. The majority of the Trade Association was marginalised because EEE wanted one society, not three, in this one village. A concentration of three societies in one village was contrary to the organisation's policy, which was to have one society per village, in a large number of villages. This would, then, extend its influence over a wide geographical region. In this case, too, the imperatives of external policy prescriptions created much conflict within the community. These cases illustrate the operation of the criteria of eligibility for aid, where some did not receive aid because of the externally formulated policy imperatives of organisations.

DDD's programme in Sinhapura was an approach to reconstruction which was concerned with resuscitating a community in terms of mobilising its own forces in civil society into a consensual, collective and combined effort which would benefit the community as a whole, and not merely the individual units (Samarasinghe, 2006; Shaw & Goda, 2004). This was a narrative which attempted to designate a set of conditions, for the emergence of a 'legitimate' civil society, which is conducive to disaster reconstruction. In this discursive construction there was a powerful, underlying, assumption that a strong civil society, able to mobilize itself successfully in a disaster, was one in which ideas, interests and action were homogeneous: "civil activism has been severely constrained by enduring ethnic polarisation and acute social inequality" (Ozerdem & Jacoby:2006:3). This narrative is in contrast, to a certain extent, to Aldrich and Crook (2008) who argue that a strong civil society in a disaster-affected community can be a double-edged weapon. They cite the trailer parks in post-disaster New Orleans in 2005 as an example. Strong civic action in these parks preserved the status quo, even though it was not in the interests of the community to do so. They argue that a strong civil society can inhibit the actions which are ultimately to the long run advantage of the community.

DDD's initiative which focussed on community development found little acceptance in Sinhapura. The point which was emphasised to me, time and time again, was that individual households should be permitted to recover before a focus on the environment and the community as a whole. Except for the few people who were involved in the venture the majority of village were critical of the organisation. While the programme performed some very important functions in terms of making people aware of the importance of tsunami bags it was not sustainable because it appealed to a collective feeling in the community which did not exist, except temporarily in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami. DDD did not read the pulse of the community, at that moment in time. The needs and expectations of Sinhapura were not incorporated into the design of the programme. This echoes Sanderson & Sharma (2008), drawing upon the experience of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, who state that post disaster reconstruction programmes are easy to get wrong for a variety of reasons.

The point about civil society is that it is a space for debate and contestation between *different* interest groups and individuals. Consensual civic action, is the *product* of this

engagement and it is negotiated. The demand for consensus, on the basis of an assumption of homogeneity, highlights an agenda which ignores the fact that consensual civic action is the product of debate and contestation, between *different* interest groups and individuals. When consensus and community mobilisation are a response to an external source, as it was in the case of the programme of DDD, it is ephemeral and disintegrates all too easily. Thus, a strong civil society is one that provides that notional space for debate, not one, necessarily, that acts collectively, on the basis of a spurious homogeneity. This is where different interests engage on a level playing field and consensus, on any issue, emerges out of this engagement. Thus, in my view, DDD's narrative of community development imposed a demand for consensual civic action without taking into account the reality of the situation. It ignored the fact that this was not a moment at which 'community development' was at the forefront of people's minds. Communities have their own dynamics, in terms of which civic action comes to be defined, and this action can be directed only up to a certain extent.

A lack of transparency was a feature of some of the programmes of assistance in Sinhapura. BBB did not reveal the criteria upon which 13 members of the Trade Association received aid, even when queries were instituted. My impression, after discussion with BBB, was that this decision to restrict the number of recipients to 13 had to do with the fact that the organisation wished to spread its assistance over a large number of villages in the district. This lack of transparency, in the selection process, provided the space for the allegations of misconduct on the part of the Executive Committee of the Trade Association, by the individuals who did not receive any assistance. In the case of EEE its encouragement of the secretary of the Trade Association, Sampath, to form a society, together with his intimates, in secret, reveals the fact that this was an organisation which was not concerned with transparent practices, in spite of the rhetoric contained in their Mission Statement. Furthermore, this episode reveals the lack of accountability shown by this organisation in relation to the community (Hilhorst, 2003). The director's attempts to suppress the problems that they encountered in Sinhapura, because he did not want public exposure reveals the recurring concern with success.

All these organisations -- CCC, BBB and EEE -- played a role in the dissolution of the Trade Association. The Trade Association may have disintegrated once the necessity

for tsunami aid was curtailed, but there is little doubt that its demise was hastened by the actions of these organisations. These actions created a situation which is the diametric opposite of the fostering of good community relations through their programmes. This can be contrasted with Nisha's comments on World Vision's activities in Tamil Nadu and the Andaman Islands:

“There is a lot of potential fighting between villages when we give relief to one village and we do not give to the other. As much as possible we tried to integrate into our planning that we did not harm anything and we used local capacities for peace.” (Nisha:2007:170).

The microfinance organisations which came to operate in Sinhapura had many of the characteristics detailed above, such as a lack of transparency and operation according to external policy criteria. However, in one important respect, the microfinance activity was different from the other types of assistance described above. It was a direct response to the needs of the community. The community needed credit, at this time, and the microfinance organisations supplied it. However, there was a downside to this. It soon became clear to the community, on the basis of the punitive conditions and the high interest levied on loans, that this was not a humanitarian activity but a commercial one. In this context, gratitude was felt to be unnecessary.

In many instances the actions of these organisations provided the space for people to expand their alliances. Through the assistance of organisations such as BBB, individuals were able to gain membership of institutions such as the Galle Chamber of Commerce and, thereby, access a variety of services and resources, which they would not have been able to access otherwise. Sampath, for instance, through his new position as a member of the Galle Chamber of Commerce was able to provide patronage to other members of the Trade Association, in terms of sponsoring training in a variety of fields. Brokers were able to expand their alliances, especially with foreign nationals, which lead, in some instances, to travel abroad. Furthermore, with the wave of microfinance, there was the opportunity for people such as Raneer to link up with new organisations and to expand their contacts and their sphere of influence. In this way not only did they improve their access to credit but they established new credit networks, using external finance, and new alliances within the village.

The intensive approach of the Trust was different to that of many of the other organisations which assisted Sinhapura. The household was the focus and the premise was that each household was affected by the disaster in a specific way, requiring a specific response. For the Trust, the imperatives of visible success were not all-consuming because it was not an organisation which saw itself as having a future which would require continuous funding from donors. Indeed, the fact that the Trust was wound up in 2013 reveals its lack of 'success', from this point of view. It becomes clear, therefore, that as far as the Trust was concerned the concerns were not those of success and continuity but about the amassing of moral capital through a humanitarian initiative.

As mentioned earlier there were individuals, sensitive to their social position, who were uncomfortable with receiving assistance from unknown, random, donors. Others attempted to neutralise the receipt of such assistance by transforming the gift into a form of assistance to which they were entitled. This was possible in many cases because once the gift had been given the donor went out of the picture -- there was no ongoing relationship. This position could not, of course, be taken in relation to the Trust because the Trustees were in the village, constantly. It would have been difficult for any member of the community to have expressed the sentiment, to the Trustees, that there was an obligation on the part of the Trust to make good any part of their loss. There were those who did not mind receiving assistance from the Trust because the Trustees were seen as long-term patrons and, to some extent, as insiders enjoying an on-going relationship with the community.

The main controversy surrounding the disbursements of aid by the Trust had to do with the issues of equity and justice. Necessarily, a judgement had to be made by the Trustees. It was a judgement made on the basis of their personal moral worldview rather than policy criteria. The perception within the community was that there should have been better mechanisms within the Trust, to distinguish genuine applicants from those who were not. This had much to do with the issue of whether the assistance provided by the Trust disturbed the existing social order, based on legitimate social advancement.

It becomes clear, therefore, that non-governmental organisations had a perspective on the basis of which they designed and implemented their disaster relief programmes. Central to this perspective was the recognition that legitimacy and success -- speedy

and visible -- were the bases upon which future funds could be attracted to the organisation and, therefore, that legitimacy and success were essential to the continuity of the organisation implementing the programmes (Mosse, 2005).

In the post-tsunami period, the achievement of success became so important that organisations competed to disburse aid, even in situations where the return (reciprocity), at the local level, was limited (Stirrat & Henkel, 1997). This is because, as Stirrat & Henkel (1997) state, following Mauss (1990), a gift always implies a return and, when NGOs give something, the return comes to them, not necessarily in a direct way through the appreciation of their efforts by recipients, but, through the reactions and responses of a variety of other institutions and agencies.

It is within this broad framework, oriented towards success, that policies regarding reconstruction evolved, and that programmes were designed and implemented. This meant that the careful matching of programmes to the particular needs of communities and, more especially, to the needs of households were low priorities. BBB, CCC, DDD and EEE all exhibited these characteristics. Programmes had to follow a set form, a formula for quick and efficient implementation, based on uniform prescriptions for the resuscitation of disaster-affected communities. Only then could the organisations claim that their programmes were a legitimate response to the disaster and, therefore, a success. Thus, there was little in the way of a culture of participation and consultation with recipients, on the part of the organisations which were implementing the programmes (Sriyananda, 2007). Needs were defined in a manner that they could be met quickly and visibly in terms of what the organisations were able to supply: "Donors often tended to be supply-oriented rather than demand-responsive" (Jayasuriya & McCawley:2010:8). The needs of target communities, therefore, had to fit into the external policy criteria of organisations. Davis (2006) sums it up aptly when he comments that the three classic principles of aid provision -- assessment of needs and damage by experienced local personnel; the non-provision of goods not requested; the non-duplication of goods that the country concerned, and local communities, can provide for themselves -- seems not to have been systematically followed. This point is echoed by Raj (2005) who states that there was much repetition of initiatives and, therefore, that the integrated effort which was clearly required was lacking.

The lack of transparent processes in the delivery of aid was an element of the framework oriented towards success. A great concern with transparency would have had implications for the speedy implementation of programmes. Issues would have had to be explained and discussed. All this would have involved resources and manpower. Thus, these organisations chose speed and success over transparency.

The demand for consensus as the basis of community development, was another means of establishing legitimacy and of pursuing success. For example, the organisation DDD's initiative to keep the village clean through the mobilisation of the community was intended to be seen as the creation of community feeling which could, eventually, be utilised for other more important purposes. The mobilisation of the community had a two-fold significance: on the one hand, the community would be seen to come together in the pursuit of common objectives which, in itself, could be described as a success; on the other, a platform was now created for other activities which depended on community mobilisation. It is this potential, which was seen as a continuing success of the endeavour.

The focus on housing over livelihoods, which came to be constituted as two distinct processes rather than as the two sides of the same life-world, had much to do with the imperatives of success. Housing lent itself far more easily to formulaic, uniform prescriptions, whereas the resuscitation of livelihoods was more complex. Uniform prescriptions were rarely adequate as the livelihood resuscitation of one household was not that of another.

This concern with success also meant that the role played by local populations, in the initial stages of the disaster, was marginalised. The Tsunami Evaluation Commission (TEC) -- an independent, learning and accountability initiative set up after the tsunami -- echoed this point when it made the following statement: that the most damaging mistake of the immediate response was to neglect and overlook the contribution of affected populations, local organizations and authorities as they were, usually, the ones who carried out the most critical life-saving efforts, immediately after an event; that relief efforts reflected a lack of understanding of local contexts, and the reluctance on the part of some international agencies to consult and work with local communities; that this approach led to poor and ineffective programme planning and, even, undermined local initiatives. Thus, giving prominence to the efforts of local populations dilutes,

underplays and diffuses the significance of the aid distributed by relief organisations.¹⁸² As far as the organisations were concerned, marginalising the contributions of local populations contributed to the construction of the discourse of success.

The transition from reconstruction into long-term development, which was a stated objective of many organisations, was another casualty of the imperatives of success. This is illustrated by the dilemma faced by the FAO, regarding its response to the tsunami.¹⁸³ A strategic response would have involved using this opportunity to steer the fishing industry in the direction of mechanisation -- a restructuring of the industry towards multi-day craft. However, such an exercise would have taken time and would have been at the expense of fishing families who were in immediate need. A humanitarian response, on the other hand, involved the resuscitation of the existing technology, speedily, so that the fishermen could go back to sea. In the event, the policy which was followed in Sri Lanka was one titled, 'build back better', on the basis of a humanitarian approach. This was not a restructuring of the fishing industry. It was about restoration with some improvements and refinements, wherever they were possible (Mulligan & Shaw, 2011). A complete restructuring of the industry would have meant that fishing communities had to be supported in the transference from one technology to another, without the loss of livelihoods in the process. Clearly, the FAO felt that this would be difficult to achieve in the circumstances, even if the capital for the new investment was a possibility. Thus, from the point of view of success, the decision to 'build back better' was the more practical alternative than the restructuring of the whole industry.

There was the belief, amongst these organisations, that good policy and good design was all that was necessary in order to achieve success. This resonates with Mosse's (2005) statement that such a belief is held by organisations without taking into account the dynamics of their own organisations, or that of the target community towards which a programme is beamed: ".....it is dangerous to impose policy prescriptions without taking institutional context into account..." (Mosse:2005:230).

There was, inherent in this situation, a certain incompatibility between the desire for speed and success, on the part of organisations, and the complexity of the needs of the

¹⁸² See Marcussen (1996) for a discussion of the validity of the objectives of development interventions.

¹⁸³ This information was communicated to me by an FAO consultant.

communities, on the other. This was a formulaic approach to reconstruction and was the logical response to the necessity for speed, in order to achieve a particular construct of success. It becomes clear, therefore, that the reconstruction discourse of the NGOs, on the south-western coast, was one which was characterised by the subordination of the needs of recipients, to the imperatives of success.

Conclusion

The reconstruction discourse of non-governmental organisations was characterised by many features: an assumption that the affected populations were homogeneous; the desire to operate on as broad a canvas as possible; the concern with success, with the consequent competition that this entailed; and the concern with the long-term development of disaster-affected communities.

The resources which flowed into Sinhapura from the state came to be framed in terms of the idea of entitlement, because of the jural relationship between the state and the citizen. Thus, communities could receive state assistance without a compromise of social position. NGOs, on the other hand, had no such clearly defined parameters or obligations. Therefore, in Sinhapura, the moral narratives with regard to the resources emanating from NGOs came to be conceptualised within the framework of the gift and the humanitarian imperative, with the implications for social position that this implied.

The volume of capital which flowed into the village through the NGOs -- in many forms, through many programmes and institutions -- resulted in an expansion in the alliances and relationships of some individuals and households, to various degrees.

Those who had existing alliances had the capacity to access external capital -- such as the tourist guides -- and to pass on this capital, accumulating some of it for themselves, in the form of commission. Others, such as Ranee, were able to establish new alliances using new, incoming capital such as microfinance and, hence, expand their capacities.

Sampath, on the other hand, used the alliance established with the Chamber of Commerce to improve his knowledge through the benefits of membership as well as disburse patronage through this membership to his contacts. Such people were able to accumulate capital, for themselves, as well as to provide patronage to their network of relationships. Thus, the options available to individuals and households in the pursuit of aspirations and social advancement became more diverse, and the process more complex, than in the case of state assistance. On the other hand, individuals such as

Charlotte, the teacher, did not benefit from the assistance of NGOs as the element of patronage was one which she could not reconcile with her social position.

As far as the tension between the landside and the seaside was concerned, the landside denounced the behaviour, of some of the fishing households and that of the *unavasara* dwellers in pursuing NGO assistance, indiscriminately, as not conforming to a *vadagath* standard.

In contrast with the social advancement relating to state resources some households, such as that of Duminda, were able to improve their social position in a far more dramatic manner. This was regarded as an illegitimate advancement of social position and was viewed with disapprobation in Sinhapura. As in the case of state benefits, the volume of capital which flowed into the village, through non-governmental means, was not of an order to affect the ideology, the aspirations and the lifestyle of the two sides of the village, nor the interaction between them. Thus, the social processes of Sinhapura, were not transformed by the inflow of non-governmental resources, consequent upon the tsunami, although some individuals utilised these resources and improved their social position, exponentially.

Chapter 6 -- The Impact of the Tsunami on Sinhapura

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the impact of the tsunami on the social processes of Sinhapura, and of the rehabilitation efforts of the state and the non-governmental sector, on these processes, in the reproduction of this community.

When the tsunami struck Sinhapura in December 2004 individuals and households, as discussed in Chapter 3, were utilising the resources available to them, accumulating capital, in terms of their capacity to do so, drawing upon their alliances and pursuing aspirations. This process took place on both the landside and the seaside of the village, although in terms of different ideologies and different aspirations. On the landside the aspiration was to a *vadagath* lifestyle, with the temple at the centre, which involved education, employment, and a particular pattern of consumption. On the seaside the lifestyle placed the emphasis on material wealth and independence. The tsunami influenced these social processes, in that it destroyed capital and affected networks of alliance which functioned as a potential safety net in times of crisis.

In this chapter, I present types of loss suffered by households placed in different circumstances, in terms of the categories identified in Chapter 3. I indicate the differential strategies of recovery pursued by these households, in the context of the resources that flowed into the village, and the networks and connections which they were able to access. Then, I analyse these post-tsunami circumstances in terms of my key theoretical concepts. I am, therefore, concerned with the remaking of Sinhapura in terms of the interaction between external initiatives and internal responses.

I am also concerned with how Sinhapura compares with some of the other communities of the south-western coast. In the final section of this chapter I examine some of the wider issues raised in this thesis.

The Post-tsunami Experience of the Different Categories of Households of Sinhapura

In this section I focus on the eight types of households and the ways in which each category utilised capital, from in-coming resources as well as those in the village, and

alliances, with kin, neighbours, the commercial world and the tourist industry, to fund their recovery. In the next section of this chapter I analyse these ethnographic data, in terms of the theoretical framework formulated in Chapter 2, and examine the impact of the tsunami on the social processes of Sinhapura.

The Households of Multi-Day Boat Owners

In the case of multi-day boat owners I shall look, particularly, at the capital that was available and the alliances that were deployed in their recovery. When the tsunami struck Sinhapura most of the multi-day boats were at sea and, therefore, escaped damage. However, the multi-day boat owners suffered damage in other ways: with *wallams* either completely destroyed or needing extensive repair; damage to their houses; loss of household goods; and loss of savings in the form of gold. The multi-day boat owners found the aid from the state and non-governmental sources insufficient to cover their losses. A few received help from kin in the interior. Those who had established relationships with commercial institutions, such as banks, received concessions on the repayment of loans. Their relationships with crewmen and their families were placed under strain as the multi-day boat owners were unable to help crewmen in their predicament as they were in straitened circumstances themselves.

Palitha Mudalali was a multi-day boat owner earning a high income, in village terms. His house was severely damaged as were his household goods. Two of his *wallams* and two engines were totally destroyed; one *wallam* and one engine required substantial repair. Two nets were also destroyed. The multi-day boat was out at sea and was, therefore, undamaged. He received the state benefits and a house in the interior. Palitha Mudalali told me that his strategy of recovery was to make the necessary repairs to his house and its effects; re-establish his sources of income; and, build back his capital. Thus, from an early stage he was determined to recover the lifestyle to which he had aspired, prior to the tsunami, through investment and expansion of the fisheries enterprise.

Palitha Mudalali told me that he received Rs. 230,000/- from a foreign national with which he had bought an engine. He also received Rs. 17,000/- from another private source. He had a contact in the Commercial Bank in Hikkaduwa and was, therefore, able to postpone the repayment of the loan on the multi-day boat, for a period. He had bought the boat with Rs. 1 million of his own money, the proceeds of the pawning of his

wife's gold and a bank loan. By July 2005 he had repaired his damaged *wallam* and was sending it out to sea, with the new engine. He also had the income from the multi-day boat. He negotiated a new loan from the Commercial Bank of Rs. 1,600,000/-, to buy a plot of land in the interior, where he planned to build a house. The cost of the land was covered by the loan, except for a small part which he had borrowed from his wife's kin. Eventually, he was making repayments on two loans from the Commercial bank -- on the boat and the land -- which worked out to Rs. 35,000/- a month. The income from the multi-day boat and one *wallam* funded the repayment of these loans, with some difficulty, as he was supporting his wife and some of his eight children.

Palitha Mudalali's position in different social fields, of different networks, meant that he had the capacity to activate alliances, which facilitated the accumulation of capital. He had access to commercial credit, through one type of alliance, and access to other types of credit through personal connections such as kinship. Thus, he was able to make his alliances 'work' for him, in the matter of credit. He was not, therefore, totally dependent on aid, whether from the state or the non-governmental sector. The purchase of land, inland, and his continuing involvement in fishing demonstrate the fact that his aspirations remained unchanged. His social position in the community suffered because of the losses of capital that he sustained. However, he had the capacity to move towards recovery.

Danasiri Mudalali was another multi-day boat owner. He had bought the boat in 1997 with state assistance of Rs. 700,000/-, a bank loan and help from his brother, and had in addition two *wallams*. He told me that he could not save much from the multi-day boat income which amounted to, sometimes, as much as Rs. 100,000/- from a single trip. This was because he was repaying the loan on the boat; maintaining his wife and three children; looking after his elderly, ailing parents; and supporting his siblings and their families. Furthermore, he said that there were constant problems with the multi-day boat such as net damage at sea -- which had happened three times -- and engine repairs, after every trip. He asserted that a man who owns two *wallams* and a multi-day boat is not, necessarily, 'cash rich' although he is perceived as a 'rich man' in the community.

Danasiri Mudalali's house was partially damaged and the household goods destroyed. One *wallam* was wrecked; the other substantially damaged. Although his multi-day boat

was at sea and, therefore, not affected by the tsunami it developed engine trouble and had to be towed into Galle harbour. It remained there for a while as he did not have the wherewithal to repair it. He restored his damaged *wallam* using some part of his savings. He crewed on another multi-day boat and received an income from his repaired *wallam*. He also received the state benefits. At this stage, his strategy was to put together the capital to repair the multi-day boat and to get back to the trajectory that he had mapped out for his household.

Danasiri Mudalali did not have the same capacity to activate those alliances -- commercial and kin -- as did Palitha Mudalali in effecting his recovery. He can also be contrasted with Wijeratne Mudalali, the brother of Palitha Mudalali, who was able to call upon his commercial contacts for credit as, in addition, to owning and operating a multi-day boat, he was a fish merchant, wholesaler, selling fish to retailers in the Kandy fish market. Danasiri Mudalali told me that he had funded his extended family and had not been able, therefore, to maintain a current account in the manner that would have enabled him to obtain a bank loan in the post- tsunami period. Furthermore, his children were young and dependent upon him while Palitha Mudalali's four sons had been crewing for a while. Thus, Danasiri Mudalali's recovery was effected through his own labour, some saved capital and the state benefits.

The Households of the Wallam Owners

The *wallam* owners did not find themselves in the same situation as the multi-day boat owners. They did, of course, receive the state benefits. Many benefitted from the grants given by the Trust and there were also several other sources from which they drew support. This variety will be seen shortly.

The tsunami left some *wallams* completely wrecked and others needing substantial repair. Houses were damaged, household goods and gold washed away, and many of the *wallam* owners found themselves burdened with loans and with little income. Many had to go into temporary accommodation. Their recovery was facilitated by assistance from the state, from NGOs, and private sources. They, too, received some help from the Trust. Rohan, for instance, had difficulty with insurance. The insurance company would not, initially, make payment for the damage to his three wheeler as the cover did not

include earthquakes and tsunamis. Eventually, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the Trust interceded on his behalf with the insurance company, and secured the compensation.

One of Jayatissa's *wallams* was totally destroyed while the other two and their engines were damaged. The Trust helped to repair one engine, at a cost of Rs. 17,000/-, and one *wallam*. He received the state benefits and some of the packages from NGOs. The family were in temporary accommodation until they received a house in the interior. Jayatissa and his family survived on the state benefits until his *wallam* was in operation. Once he had received the house, he rented it out, repaired his old house by the seaside, and lived in it. Thus, he had a rent income in addition to his *wallam* income. Next, he repaired his second *wallam* and put it out to sea. When I interviewed him in 2008 he had just bought a third one. His network of relationships did not afford him the capacity to fund his recovery. However, he was able to utilise the resources available in the post-tsunami context, such as the Trust and other external organisations, to fund his recovery. While there was some loss of social position due to the loss of capital, Jayatissa felt that he had successfully overcome the consequences of the catastrophe. He did not, therefore, see it as an occasion to reassess his aspirations. Jayatissa's recovery can be contrasted with that of Somadasa whose wife had kin in the North Central Province, who provided him with the credit to buy a new *wallam*, after three of his *wallams* had been destroyed in the tsunami.

Gunasena was a *wallam* owner who had no experience of fishing. He had worked for the State Engineering Corporation, amongst other institutions, in his youth. When he came back to Sinhapura, and settled there upon marriage, he had bought a *wallam* and a large canoe with his savings. His wife was from the interior and her dowry included cinnamon and paddy land. They had three sons and a daughter. Gunasena had income from various sources: the cinnamon and paddy land; rent from a house which he had inherited from his father; the two boats; and, some interest income. He believed in putting some part of his income into his savings account, every month, and insisted that his children do the same. The house that he live in, fronting onto the High Street, was bought with his earnings. The connections of this household were with their neighbours, in the vicinity of the High Street, and with some of his wife's kin in the interior. His wife's brother was the chief incumbent of a temple in the interior and was an important patron, as far as this household was concerned. Gunasena had been involved with the

Communist Party since the 1970s and his political links were important. Gunasena's main concern was to see his children creditably established, in suitable occupations, and to ensure that they made suitable marriages.

The tsunami caused no structural damage to Gunasena's house but his household goods were washed away; the *wallam* required repair; and the canoe was destroyed. Gunasena, unlike many Sinhapura residents, had the capital to get his *wallam* repaired and the craft was soon at sea. He used the state benefits to replenish household goods such as the television. However, he would not permit his children or his wife to accept any packages from NGOs, particularly if this involved standing on the roadside. Only one of his many sources of income was affected by the tsunami and, consequently, the damage that he suffered was marginal. His recovery was facilitated by his savings together with the benefits, i.e., those disbursed by the state which he regarded as his entitlement. Although Gunasena had several networks of alliance -- kin, commercial and political - - which he might have accessed he was far too conscious of his social position to do so. The impulses of recovery were oriented towards the aspirations which were being pursued.

Jayantha Mudalali, the brother of Wijepala Mudalali, had four *wallams* at the time of the tsunami. He had, besides, a store on the High Street which sold fisheries equipment. It was with the income from the store that he invested in the *wallams*, one by one. Two *wallams* were destroyed; the other two were damaged. With his savings he repaired the two damaged *wallams* and put them back to sea. The store was not structurally damaged but the stock was ruined. He told me that he had lost around Rs. 2 million worth of assets. He received Rs. 15,000/- from the Trust to restock the shop. He also received Rs. 20,000/-, from the organisation, BBB, for the same purpose. While he suffered serious damage to some of his assets he had, nevertheless, the capacity to fund some part of his recovery -- the repair of the *wallams*. For the rest, he was able to utilise the resources of BBB and the Trust. The two repaired *wallams* soon began to give an income. The re-opened store cashed in on the need to restore fisheries equipment. Furthermore, his house, inherited from his father, was on the landside and unaffected by the tsunami. He also received the state benefits. Unlike others who had to use the state benefits to replace household goods, he ploughed this capital back into the business.

Shortly after the tsunami Jayantha Mudalali was operating his economic ventures to advantage. He was seen as having made a successful recovery. It was in this context that he was able to demonstrate to the Commercial Bank -- where he had a long standing current account -- that he had sufficient income to service a loan of Rs. 2 million, which he required to buy a second-hand multi-day boat. In 2006 he obtained the loan and bought the multi-day boat. At the time I interviewed him in 2008 -- the first interview had been in 2005 -- he was having no difficulty in repaying this loan at an amount of Rs. 38,000/- a month. At the interview he told me that he had just made a profit of Rs. 1 million from the multi-day boat and that, with this kind of profit, he could easily repay the loan. Most of his aspirations were centred upon the future of his three small children and the best education that he could secure for them, through his earnings.

All the *wallam* owners incurred some degree of loss. Without exception they wanted to get back to their scheme of income and to the centrality of the *wallam* in it.

The Households of Crew Members

The tsunami damaged the *wallams* on which the crewmen worked which left them without income. At the same time, it damaged their houses and their household goods. Many had to go into temporary accommodation and depend on state benefits and NGO relief. Some received canoes from the Trust. One or two of the crewmen, such as Duminda, benefitted from windfalls in the form of *wallams* from foreign nationals. Through an external resource Duminda experienced a marked improvement in the level of his capital, his capacity and, therefore, his social position. While the effects of the tsunami were catastrophic, it did not turn crewmen away from the sea. This is because they had previously managed risk successfully, and conceived the tsunami as a once in a 2000 year experience. Their aspirations, although suffering a setback, remained much the same. As crewmen their closest relationships were with other crewmen and boat owners, although on occasion there was competition and conflict between crewmen for places on a boat.

Priyantha was a crew member who had a small canoe of his own which was destroyed by the tsunami. He also ran a business from his home, selling batteries for the large electric lamps which were taken to sea. The *wallam* on which he crewed suffered damage. His house was demolished and the household goods washed away, including

the gold which was in his wife's wardrobe. Priyantha was rather bitter. He told me that he had completed his house not long before the tsunami and that he had built it very carefully, with the foundation alone costing Rs. 85,000/-. When the tsunami struck he had forty batteries in the house, each worth Rs. 4500/-, which were washed away. He had been making Rs. 30,000/- a month from the battery business, which he had started with capital from his earnings in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, there was a bank loan of Rs. 25,000/- -- obtained to build the toilet -- which was being repaid in instalments. He had also borrowed Rs. 50,000/- from a money-lender, Shirani, who was pressing him, in the aftermath of the disaster, to return the loan.

Immediately after the tsunami Priyantha, his wife and six month old baby were housed in the temple. Eventually, he moved to temporary housing on the school land, before receiving a house in the interior. Priyantha received the state benefits and a canoe from the Trust, as well as some packages from NGOs. He told me that this was very inadequate compensation for everything that he had lost. He made the point that many of those coming to the Trust for assistance were 'charlatans' and that the Trust should have been funding genuine claimants, like himself, to the full extent of their loss. Thus, Priyantha's modes of income -- crewing, the canoe and the battery business -- were disrupted and he had loans to repay. With the canoe he received from the Trust, he started inshore fishing and was receiving an income. Eventually, the *wallam* which he crewed upon was repaired and he began to go to sea. However, he was not able to restart his battery business as he did not have the capacity to accumulate the capital necessary for this. He felt that his social position in the community had contracted and, with it, the aspirations which had been his before the tsunami. He did not see himself as having made a successful recovery.

Bennet's house and household goods were destroyed by the tsunami. He and his family were in temporary accommodation on the school land. They received the state benefits. The boat on which Bennet had crewed was destroyed and he was without income. He received a canoe from the Trust from which he derived an income. His wife obtained the capital to buy a stove from a foreign national and, the money for a gas cylinder, from the Trust. Whilst still in the temporary accommodation she was able to restart her stringhopper business. Just prior to the tsunami she had taken a loan of Rs. 50,000/-, from a microfinance organisation. Of this, Rs. 12,000/- was lost in the tsunami. She told

me that the repayment on this loan was Rs. 1700/- per month, and that the interest had been unpaid after the tsunami.

They received a house in the tsunami resettlement inland and, once established in the new housing settlement, Bennet would come to Sinhapura on his bicycle, in order to go to sea. His wife continued with her stringhopper business. Overall, he and his wife felt that they had come through the tsunami experience without too much trauma. They were granted a house and ten perches of land in the interior. This was in addition to their land on the seaside in Sinhapura, on which they could even rebuild, once the buffer zone had been shifted back to the 35m limit. At the time I interviewed them, in 2008, they were thinking about selling one of the properties in order to buy a *wallam*. This household did not have many networks and the ones that they did have, their neighbours and kin, were in the same situation as themselves. Thus, their recovery was facilitated by assistance from external organisations and state benefits.

Ranee's husband was a crewman, a skipper of a *wallam*, at the time of the tsunami. They were living in a house, on the seaside, built on her father's property off the High Street. They had two small children. Ranee had become proficient in the making of *jadi*, soap, clothes, and coir mats which gave the household a supplementary income. The immediate consequence of the tsunami was that a good part of the house was damaged and household goods washed away. The *wallam* on which Ranee's husband crewed was damaged. The *wallam* owner used his savings and had the craft repaired speedily so that, within a month of the tsunami, the boat was back at sea. For a brief period, Ranee and her husband were without the income from the *wallam* with the result that they were unable to pay back the instalments of a loan, of Rs. 100,000/-, taken from two microfinance organisations. The house, along with some others in the neighbourhood, was repaired by an Italian NGO. Meanwhile, Ranee received a sewing machine from the Trust and a zig-zag sewing machine from the Salvation Army. As mentioned in the previous chapter Ranee got involved in the new microfinance societies and used loans from these organisations to repay the microfinance loans taken previously. It was through the establishment of alliances with the new microfinance organisations that she was able to expand her household's capacity to accumulate capital.

The crew members also did not see a better alternative than to continue with their occupation. It had possibilities of advancement which they expected to utilise and as with the wallam owners they did not, after some weeks, regard another tsunami as a serious possibility.

The Households of the High Street Traders

The tsunami destroyed equipment as well as stock on the High Street. In the case of those who lived on the High Street their household goods were washed away. The Trust and other NGOs such as BBB and EEE enabled them to restart their businesses. Help was also received from kin in the interior. Credit facilities were provided by trading partners from other regions such as Kandy and Colombo. Thus, alliances established before the tsunami were important in this context. Banks were of assistance only to those people who had a current account and a credit history. Daya, for instance, who had a nets and spare parts store on the High Street had a long-standing relationship with the Commercial Bank in Hikkaduwa. He had taken loans, previously, and had a good repayment record. Thus, he received a loan of Rs. 900,000/- to re-stock his shop. He had the capacity to activate his commercial alliances, in order to access credit in terms of his established record as a sound businessman. In Daya's own view, and in that of the community, he recovered successfully after the tsunami.

Wijepala Mudalali's house on the High Street suffered partial damage and the household goods were washed away. He was a brother of Jayantha Mudalali. The bakery, situated next to the house, was devastated with the equipment damaged beyond repair. His luxury seafood business was owed Rs. 500,000/- from the Hikkaduwa resorts which he has not, to this day, received. The fish business was disrupted as there was no catch due to the fact that the fishing fleet was damaged. Furthermore, those who owed him money could not repay it. Two of his *wallams* were shattered; the other two required substantial repair. He told me that his losses amounted to Rs. 3 million.

Wijepala Mudalali repaired his two *wallams* with his savings and sent them back to sea. The bakery had not been a successful venture. However, it had been providing the daily expenses of the household with a profit of approximately Rs. 500/-. The resuscitation of the bakery required an investment of Rs. 100,000/- to obtain what was a marginal income. He decided that this expenditure was not worthwhile and the bakery was abandoned. He received a grant of Rs. 20,000/-, from the Trust to re-start his fish

business. His capital was being rolled between the businesses so that when they all crashed Wijepala Mudalali found himself cast into the position of being grateful for the grant of Rs. 20,000/- from the Trust. He was able to demonstrate to the Trust that he was a worthy recipient of a grant, in terms of his successful entrepreneurial record, in a context where there was great competition for the limited resources which the Trust had to disburse. Furthermore, he was able to access credit from Kandy fish merchants with whom he had cultivated contacts, who extended lines of credit to him. His experience was similar to that of Romesh who had a business connection with bicycle spare parts wholesalers in Colombo. They extended lines of credit to him by promising not to collect on his cheque, for four months. Wijepala Mudalali received the state benefits and some household goods from a church. Like Gunasena he felt that his social position would be compromised by standing on the roadside for hand-outs from NGOs. After the tsunami Wijepala Mudalali focused on his fish business. He felt that his social position had suffered with his loss of assets. While he lost capital, the fact that he was positioned in several different social fields, and different networks, meant that he had some capacity to access those alliances which helped him to accumulate the capital to facilitate his recovery.

Dinesh had three businesses on the High Street. He had established these with hard-earned capital from employment in Saudi Arabia, working as a lorry driver. They were a music centre; a video cassette rental; and a beauty salon. All the businesses suffered damage to stock worth Rs. 600,000/-. His house was on the landside and was unaffected. He had one child. He received Rs. 15,000/- from the Trust to re-equip his businesses; a similar amount from BBB; and Rs. 12,000/- worth of goods from a Colombo beauty salon.

Although Dinesh re-started the beauty salon and the video cassette rental he was not able to re-start the music centre. He found that the capital outlay was more than he could fund at that time. Once he had re-established the businesses he found that, as luxury businesses, they were not doing well. Visiting a beauty salon was a low priority at such a time. Thus, using a loan from his wife's kin and having pawned her gold he bought a three wheeler, on finance. He ran it himself leaving his assistant in charge of the other two businesses. Dinesh's recovery was based on some capital of his own in the form of gold and assistance from the Trust, NGOs and kin. Although he lost much in

the way of capital he had some capacity to fund his recovery. He came from one of the poorer families in the village. He felt that the social position which he had worked hard to carve out for himself had suffered and that he would never recover the capital -- his earnings from Saudi Arabia -- that he had lost.

Kanchana's experience, detailed in Chapter 5, meant that she acquired a capital asset through an external organisation. Her strategy of recovery was regarded as a successful one in the village as it enabled her to improve her social position in the sense that she now became the owner of a substantial High Street business, in village terms. Her experience can be contrasted with that of Nimal who had a crab business. He had twenty crab pens in the river which were washed away. He told me that an NGO had expressed some interest in helping him to reconstruct his pens but it had come to nothing in the end. In the case of Kanchana the organisation, CCC, felt that assisting her would help to develop a whole industry. In Nimal's case the expensive outlay of restoring the crab pens was seen as benefitting just one individual and his family.

Sampath had a communication centre on the High Street, launched in November 1999, shortly after his marriage. It provided the services of telephone calls and faxes. He started the business with his savings from the army, of Rs. 35,000/-; a loan from his wife's aunt, of Rs. 50,000/-; and the pawning of his wife's gold, amounting to Rs. 113,000/-. Sampath stated that it was a good business and that he had nurtured it by ploughing the profits back into the business, rather than using it for domestic consumption, as he had a job in which he worked on a shift basis. He had one child.

At the time of the tsunami he had just bought a computer for Rs. 70,000/- and a printer for Rs. 20,000/-. He stated that the idea behind this expansion of his communication business, was to offer computer generated, astrological predictions. With the tsunami he lost stock worth about Rs. 500,000/-. He was back in business by 6 January 2005. A telecom company, Suntel, repaired his phone and he was able to re-open his doors as a communication centre. He received a grant of Rs. 12,000/-, from the Trust, to buy a new fax machine. He did this, putting in Rs. 5000 from his savings. Subsequently, the organisation, BBB, donated a fax machine. As he already had a machine he asked BBB whether they could give him another item in its stead. BBB refused the exchange. Whereupon, he asked BBB whether he could sell the machine and use the money for

something else. They agreed. He sold it for Rs. 12,000/-. With this money he bought a laminating machine. He had a connection with a company in Galle and they sold him a second hand photocopy machine on the basis of a hire purchase scheme. He had to pay a deposit of Rs. 20,000/- and Rs. 5000/- a month. He also received Rs. 25,000/- worth of stationery from the organisation, EEE.

Sampath had the capacity to activate some commercial alliances in order to accumulate capital. He was also able to access capital from external sources. A bank loan was not a possibility as he did not have a current account, on the one hand, and on the other, the turnover of the business was insufficient. The aid from BBB was facilitated by the Galle Chamber of Commerce. He formed a connection with this organisation and through their activities attended training and management courses all around the country. He also came into contact with the 'big' businessmen of the Galle region. Eventually, Sampath was invited to become a member of the Chamber. The five hundred members of the Chamber were, largely the big business people of the region -- Hikkaduwa Odiris, Kumarakanda Harischandra, Kotigama Senadheera. Membership involved a complicated process of vetting which he was able to bypass. Sampath built new networks of alliance, through strategic manoeuvring, in order to establish the capacity for the accumulation of capital in terms of continuing aspirations. He felt that he had used both the alliances that he had, and the ones that he was able to cultivate, to his advantage, and that he had recovered successfully.

The Households of the Service Providers

In the case of the service providers the damage was to the premises, to equipment and to stock. Where the premises were next to the residence this too was damaged and household goods washed away. Income and the repayment of loans became a problem. These households benefitted from the state programmes, from the packages of NGOs and from the Trust. The organisations, BBB and EEE, also helped people in this category as did the new microfinance organisations which came to Sinhapura after the tsunami.

Sushila, the sister of Daya, and her husband ran an eating house next to their residence in the High Street. It was started in 1991, upon their marriage, with a loan from the

Bank of Ceylon. With the tsunami the eating house was razed to the ground. Although the house was not structurally damaged the household goods were ruined. Sushila's kin -- her four brothers and sister who were all neighbours -- were in the same situation, as was her husband's sister, Shirani. This household received the state benefits. The household goods were restored through several packages from NGOs. With a grant from the Trust, of Rs. 10,000/-, the eating house was re-opened on the verandah of their house. Thereafter, they received four tables and sixteen chairs from an NGO and also two tables and eight chairs from the organisation, BBB. They used their savings to get the freezer repaired. The refrigerator, however, could not be repaired. With a further grant of Rs. 10,000/-, from the Trust, and the pawning of Sushila's gold they bought a refrigerator. In 2006 they built a small retail outlet next to the house, using the proceeds of a *seettu*. In 2008, when I was doing my fieldwork, the eating house was popular with the fishermen while the retail outlet was able to cash in on the custom of those travelling along the Galle Road. The household felt that they had recovered their capital losses, had, in fact, even advanced, in terms of the income from the retail outlet. Thus, the aspiration to a *vadagath* lifestyle, in which the education of their three sons figured significantly, was enhanced. This household did not have the capacity to activate many alliances; their kin were in the same situation. They recovered, substantially, through the inflow of capital from external organisations.

With the disaster Wasantha, the brother of Sushila, lost much of his equipment and the stock of wood in his carpentry workshop. For a period his income, from this source, was non-existent. Since he lived on the upper storey of his house, his household goods were unaffected. He received a grant of Rs. 17,000/- from the Trust. This enabled him to buy some of the equipment that had been washed away by the waves. The partially damaged houses in Sinhapura which required repair provided him with work. He received assistance in the form of equipment from the organisations, BBB and EEE. He also received some of the packages from NGOs and the state benefits. His family -- three brothers and two sisters were all affected by the tsunami -- were in no position to help him. His wife, however, was from an affluent family living in a village in the interior. She had an income from some cinnamon land which was her dowry. This income sustained this household after the tsunami. Neither Wasantha's kin nor client networks were of much help as they were in the same predicament as himself. His recovery was funded by the state benefits and external sources.

Shirani, the sister of Sushila's husband, was involved in the lucrative activity of money-lending. She had three properties on the High Street from which she received rent. She helped out at Sushila's eating house and received some remuneration. The property in which she lived had a large garden with eighteen coconut trees from which she derived an income. Her husband ran a printing business which was not doing well at the time of the tsunami. The financial burden of the household was borne by Shirani, which included the education of her three teenage children. Though on the landside her house was quite close to the river. With the tsunami the river overflowed and flooded the premises. The house was not structurally damaged but the household goods were washed away and the equipment of her husband's printing business was damaged, requiring substantial repair. Shirani's money-lending activity suffered because those who owed her money could not return it. She was the organiser of two landside *seettus* which broke down amidst recrimination and some conflict. She had taken loans from the seven microfinance societies of which she was a member, and was cast into great difficulty in the matter of repayment. The income from rent also became uncertain as the High Street traders who rented her properties took a while to recover. The income from the eating house also ceased for the period that it was out of operation. It was only the income from coconut which continued. However, Shirani soon had the household back on the path towards a *vadagath* lifestyle. When the new microfinance organisations started operating in the village she joined several, making a total of twelve. She then took loans from these organisations to service some of her debts and to start the money-lending activity again. She also constituted a new *seettu*. This was not a household which had many alliances which could be activated for its recovery. Their kin were in the same situation. It is the capital from the external organisations, and the state benefits which secured their recovery.

The Households of Persons Externally Employed

Where the main bread-winner of this category of household was employed by the government the salary continued to be paid. Where people were employed in the commercial sector or the tourist trade, their salaries ceased to be paid as many of these organisations were not functioning as viable units. The tourist guides, in some instances, managed to function as brokers and received some income by way of commissions.

Charlotte was a teacher in one of the government schools located in Sinhapura. She was on a fixed, government salary and her husband had retired from government service. The lump sum of his retirement fund had been used to purchase a variety of luxury consumer goods which were ruined by the tsunami -- an organ, a television, a music set, a refrigerator etc. She had supplemented the teaching with a small home business of sewing clothes for the neighbours. She stated that a teacher's salary was not enough to live on, with her husband in retirement and a daughter still in school.

Both her sewing machines were damaged by the tsunami. Although they were repaired, at a cost of about Rs. 3000/-, they broke down again and she had to dispose of them. Charlotte was no longer able to continue the sewing business and this mode of income ceased. The walls of the house were made of *kabok* (laterite) and the salt in the tsunami water affected the walls. Charlotte stated that the house was, literally, falling down about their ears and that she had started to repair it using some of her own savings. She had not waited for the Rs. 100,000/-, which, as detailed in Chapter 4, she did not receive. She asserted that she had obtained the Tsunami Card benefit from the state, but that she had not received the third and fourth tranche of the Rs. 20,000/- on the basis that she was a government employee with a steady income. Her point, however, was that the salary was in no way sufficient to recover all that she had lost. A Foundation for Teachers disbursed Rs. 10,000/- to her. Like Gunasena, neither Charlotte nor her husband was willing to pursue the NGO aid as they felt that this would compromise their social position.

Without any political alliances, to activate, Charlotte could not fight for the Rs. 100,000/- which was her due. Nor did she have the capacity to recover the luxury consumer items which were destroyed. An NGO to which she made an application for assistance refused to help her, because they said she had an income in the form of her salary. She told me that if one were a government servant one did not get anything from NGOs, because one had a salary, however small it was. The expenditure of her husband's retirement fund on luxury consumer items was, in Charlotte's perception, a step towards a *vadagath* lifestyle. She felt that it would be impossible to recover this capital. Thus, she was bitter because she felt that the household had taken a permanent step down in terms of social position. Furthermore, she was worried about the implications of this decline for her 16-year-old daughter's education and marriage.

Charlotte had few alliances, either of a business or kin nature, to fund her recovery. She had to rely on her savings and the state benefits.

Nayana, a nurse employed at the Karapitiya General Hospital, the main teaching hospital in the south, was in a similar situation. As she and her husband were both government employees and received salaries, they too faced many problems in establishing their eligibility for aid and replenishing the household effects which had been washed away.

Harin, the brother of Nimal, had a heavy vehicle license and, at the time of the tsunami, was employed as a fork lift driver for the Road Development Authority (RDA), on a temporary basis. The day after the tsunami he had been instructed, by the army, to drive an RDA lorry which was transporting bodies to mortuaries in the interior. When he reported for work at the RDA, after a couple of days, he was informed that he would be sent to the North, as a punishment transfer, because he had used an RDA lorry without permission. He refused the transfer and was summarily sacked from his position. When I asked him why he did not go to the Labour Tribunal he explained that it was time-consuming, and that he had been attempting to get his job back through channels of patronage. He had approached two local government politicians but, according to him, they had little influence with the RDA and, further, they were not interested in helping an 'unimportant' individual such as himself. With the loss of this income Harin was cast into great difficulty as he had a wife and two small children to support. Furthermore, he had just bought a three wheeler, on finance, two months before the tsunami which was damaged. The repayment was Rs. 4500/- per month. He got into arrears after the tsunami. He had to borrow Rs. 40,000/-, through his wife who was a member of a microfinance organisation, to get his three wheeler repaired as the insurance refused to pay. With the income from the three wheeler, once it was repaired, he had to repay the finance company and the microfinance loan, and support his family. Harin lost his mode of income and did not have the capacity to recover it.

Tourist guides like Suneetha and Asanka, lost a part of their income because of the devastation of the tourist industry. However, they had some capacity, in terms of alliances with foreign nationals, to act as brokers of tsunami finance and fund both their own recovery and that of others in the community.

The Female-Headed Households

The damage suffered by the households in this category was to the house itself, the loss of household goods, and damage to the equipment used in the income earning activity. Sewing machines were a case in point. These households were helped by the state, by the NGOs and by the Trust.

Lakmalee engaged in three types of businesses: hairdressing and beauty culture; cake making; and dress making. She lived with her mother on the High Street and was the main income-earner for the household. While there was no structural damage to the house the equipment of the businesses and the household goods were either washed away or ruined, as in the case of the sewing machine which was beyond repair. With initial assistance from the Trust, of Rs. 15,000/-, she bought a new sewing machine and cloth. People needed new clothes and she was able to respond to this need. She also received assistance from the organisations, BBB and EEE, packages from NGOs and the state benefits. Her clients were mostly from Sinhapura -- in fact, her neighbours. Thus, her network was of little use in recovery. It was the capital from the external organisations and the state which facilitated her recovery.

Ramya and her mother lived in a house fronting the Galle Road, near the main junction of Sinhapura. Since her father's death, two years before the tsunami, the household position as regards income, had been precarious. Her mother received a very small benefit from the Department of Social Services and plaited coir for a low wage. Their income, as I discovered in the course of my fieldwork in 2008, was so small that it seemed a miracle that they were able to live on it. It had not been possible for Ramya to pursue higher education after the Ordinary Level examination due to financial reasons. She told me that she had made little effort to secure any employment either. They had few relatives in Sinhapura and contacts were limited to one or two neighbouring households. Their aspirations centred on the marriage of Ramya.

The tsunami damaged the rear wall of the house and the household goods were washed away. The income from coir ceased as the retting pits were destroyed. The house which was in a dilapidated state was made worse by the tsunami. Their neighbours helped them to buy the raw materials necessary to rebuild the damaged wall and Ramya did it herself. They received the basic government assistance of the Tsunami Card but, as mentioned in Chapter 4, did not receive the Rs. 100,000/-. They received a few

packages from NGOs. Through the initiatives of the Trust, which established a weekly welfare grant for this household, they were able to improve their weekly consumption of essential items. Ramya was drawn into the activities of the Trust in terms of helping to pack the candles and interacting with other women on the Trust premises. Thus, she was able to forge new alliances of friendship. This household occupied a low position in the community and were the objects of pity and scorn. They did not have the capacity, either in terms of capital or in terms of alliances, to fund their recovery. They recovered through the state benefits, some NGO aid and the initiatives of the Trust. Eventually, in 2010, Ramya married a young man, a cinnamon peeler, whom she had met on a visit to relatives who lived in the interior. Now, she lives with her husband, her mother and a baby in Sinhapura. The most significant aspiration of this household has been realised.

The Households of the Unavasara Dwellers

The *unavasara* dwellings were washed away by the tsunami. Those who were accustomed to utilising the labour of the *unavasara* households were unable to do so as they, themselves, were in straitened circumstances. The *unavasara* did not have the capacity, either in their networks of alliance nor in terms of their own capital, to achieve their recovery. Their hopes were realised as the fortuitous consequence of the tsunami - a house, rather than a shack, in a new community with the commercial, educational and recreational opportunities that this shift presented. In addition to this they received the state benefits. Their social position was such that they were not constrained by the more obvious concerns which influenced people such as Gunasena and Charlotte. They had little choice but to stand on the roadside and pursue the varied forms of NGO aid.

With the tsunami Ranjanie's household had to take refuge in the temple until they received temporary accommodation on the school land. She told me that when you have nothing you are not too proud to stand in queues, and that she had obtained many packages from NGOs apart from the state benefits. I visited her in 2008, in her new house. She was very proud of it although she did complain of the leaking roof and the cracks which were developing in the walls. She stated that all her aspirations had been realised: a house and land in a community where, since everyone was a newcomer, they, the *unavasara*, were not the socially unacceptable outsiders that they had been in Sinhapura. She felt that in this community her family would have the opportunity to accumulate new types of capital, forge new alliances and begin a new life.

The Impact of the Tsunami on the Social Processes of Sinhapura

My concern in this section is to analyse the social processes of Sinhapura, consequent upon the tsunami, in terms of the ethnography described above. In doing so I utilise the framework of analysis spelt out in Chapter 2, which draws upon the concepts of Bourdieu (1977, 1990) and Appadurai (2004). To do this effectively I must recapitulate some of the features of Sinhapura described in Chapters 1 and 3.

Sinhapura was a community which took shape during the colonial period. In the 1950s fishing, which was artisanal, and coir provided the income of the majority. The *jadi* (dried fish) trade with India was important, as was the gem trade with the countries of South-East Asia. Thus, the important personages of the community were the *jadi mudalalis* and the owners of the *madal* (beach seine net). The Town Council of the area was in Sinhapura, as was the police station, and there was a functioning harbour with an Excise Office. The railway, by then, had long been established which meant that educational institutions in Galle and Amabalangoda were easily accessible and urban occupations became a possibility. With these options of education and employment, migration to the larger towns of the region and to Colombo took place.

With the first steps of mechanization in the 1960s, and the fishing boom and the concomitant rise in incomes, an important change took place. The *wallam* owners and their crews began to be important people in the community challenging the *jadi mudalalis* and the *madal* owners. This coincided with the diminution of the *jadi* trade in the 1960s. While *madal* fishing continued, its contribution to the catch was a fraction of that of the *wallams*. More formal systems of credit emerged, such that credit was no longer the responsibility of a few patrons. The sale of fish also underwent a change. Middle-men with appropriate equipment and transport, catering to markets in Colombo and Kandy, became the new buyers of Sinhapura produce. Political and administrative changes -- with caste continuing as a political force -- also took place at this time.

With the decline of the *jadi* trade and the increasing wealth and importance of the fishing families, the *jadi* households adopted the stance that while the fishing households might have wealth, and the power which comes from this wealth, they did

not have the refinement that comes from living according to Buddhist values. This was the genesis of the *vadagath* lifestyle.

The *wallam* owners and, subsequently, the multi-day boat owners did not become the new capitalists of the village, replacing the *madal* owners and the *jadi mudalalis* of a previous generation. The multi-day boat owners were not oriented towards village leadership but towards prominence in the region, in terms of contact with the big businessmen of the region and with its important politicians.

I have already commented on the manner in which the loss of Sinhapura's position as a regional centre had implications for leadership. The division between the landside and the seaside has been such that in the prevailing situation, with neither side able to impose its ideology on the other, there is little likelihood of leaders emerging who are acceptable to both sides. Thus, Sinhapura continues to be without village leaders who are able to lobby the external world on its behalf.

While the internal divisions between the landside and the seaside had become very marked, the state continued to regard the village as one entity for administrative purposes. There were resources which were available to Sinhapura as a community, especially in the matter of services and governmental employment. Besides this, in political terms, in relation to the surrounding communities, particularly Kotigama, Sinhapura continues to regard itself as a unit. These integrating forces, therefore, tend to operate against the divisive forces that are expressed in the respective ideologies of the two sides.

When the tsunami struck Sinhapura, the impact of this disaster was, primarily, an impact on capital -- economic, social and symbolic. The destruction of this capital meant a concomitant effect on the capacity to accumulate capital, as well as on aspirations. With the new resources which came into the community, the avenues for the accumulation of capital became more varied and diverse. However, what was valued in this community before the tsunami, for example government employment, continued

to be valued afterwards. Some households were more successful in accessing the external sources of capital and advancing the social position of their households, accordingly, than others which did not have the capacity to do so.

In terms of the ethnography presented in the previous section of this chapter it is possible to categorise household response to, and recovery from, the tsunami. In this section I shall draw out the salient features in terms of which individuals and households felt that their social position had either contracted or expanded.

Some households lost capital, therefore the capacity to accumulate capital, and therefore social position. Social position is the position designated by virtue of the possession of capital and, therefore, of capacity. It implies a social order which is hierarchical, where social positions are in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence relative to each other, in terms of capacity (Jenkins, 2002). The scale of loss was such that these households did not have the capacity to access those sources of capital which could be deployed to recover the capital that they had lost. These were households which did not possess many political or commercial alliances which could be used in this situation. As a consequence, these households felt that their aspirational horizons had also contracted. Priyantha, Dinesh and Charlotte are examples of this type of household. They felt that their social position had contracted, relative to others who were in a similar position before the tsunami.

Priyantha lost his house, his canoe and his business, and the *wallam* on which he crewed was damaged. Furthermore, he had loans to repay. Priyantha's view was that he would never be able to recover the capital, some from earnings in Saudi Arabia, which he had lost and that the aspirations, which were based on this capital, would have to be abandoned. Dinesh was in a similar position. He had started his three businesses with capital from earnings in Saudi Arabia and felt that this would never be recovered. In his case, too, the aspirations of accumulating financial capital, investing it, educating his daughter and establishing her in life, took a downward turn.

Charlotte's house was badly damaged and a range of consumer goods washed away by the tsunami. She felt that in terms of what her household had lost the state benefits were wholly inadequate. She and her husband were people who were very conscious of their *vadagath* position and were unwilling to pursue NGO aid in the way that, for instance, the *unavasara* households were willing to do. Charlotte felt that many of her aspirations

regarding her teenage daughter, relating to education and marriage, could not be realised given the circumstances of the household after the tsunami.

There were other households whose social position contracted -- position in the social order diminished -- relative to other households, but whose aspirations remained the same. While Palitha Mudalali lost *wallams*, house and property and gold he had alliances, commercial and kin, which could be deployed in his recovery. He had the capacity, therefore, to get back onto the path that he had been travelling, and pursue his aspirations of accumulating financial capital, investing it, and educating his children and establishing them in terms of employment and marriage. Wijepala Mudalali found himself in similar circumstances after the tsunami. Although he suffered damage to his four businesses and to some of his *wallams*, and in spite of the fact that he refused to pursue NGO aid, because of the concerns with his *vadagath* position, he had sufficient capacity in terms of the alliances that he already had and the ones that he was able to access, to effect a recovery which enabled him to pursue the aspirations that he had had before the tsunami.

Some households experienced a windfall, in the sense of a capital asset. With this increase of capital and, therefore, of capacity the aspirations that they had became more realisable. This meant that their social position improved. Furthermore, a new vista of aspirations became accessible. Duminda, a crew member, who received a *wallam* from a philanthropic individual, and Kanchana, who received a capital asset in the form of the engine repair centre from an NGO, fall into this category. Ranjanie's household also falls into this category. In moving to the tsunami resettlement all Ranjanie's aspirations for her household were realised and with the opportunities of a new community previously unimaginable aspirations, in terms of education and employment, opened up.

Then there were the households which experienced substantial loss but had the capacity to recover some part of their capital, speedily, so that although their social position suffered it was a temporary setback. While capital was destroyed they had capacity in terms of networks of alliance -- commercial, kin and neighbourhood -- which could be mobilised in the strategy of recovery. Thus, these households had alliances which could be used more productively than others, in accessing capital.

While Jayantha Mudalali lost considerable capital he was able to access aid from NGOs and the Trust and effect his recovery through these networks. With his income re-established he was able, by 2006, to obtain a bank loan in order to purchase a multi-day boat. Thus, within a short period after the tsunami this individual's social position had improved greatly, as the owner of a multi-day boat. His aspirational horizons in terms of advancing his family expanded accordingly. Daya was in a similar position to Jayantha Mudalali. Living on the landside his house, too, was unaffected, and the damage was to his store. Through a considerable bank loan he was able to recover.

Other households utilised the external resources which flowed into this community, in the form of state benefits and NGO assistance in their strategy of recovery. This capital, and the alliances which became possible because of it, enabled these households to proceed in the desired direction at a rate inconceivable, had the processes of community reproduction progressed without the intervention of the tsunami. These households experienced an expansion of their capital as well as their alliances, with the potential to accumulate more capital, and a concomitant enhancement of their aspirations. To put it slightly differently, the capital that they were able to access enabled them to strengthen their capacity to accumulate further capital and to create networks which could, potentially, do the same. Sampath, Raneer, Shirani and Sushila are examples of such households. The households whose social position was adversely affected by the sudden improvement in the fortunes of others, regarded this improvement in the situation of such people as social advancement which was not legitimate.

Through the connection with the Chamber of Commerce Sampath was able to forge many alliances with the 'big' businessmen of the region. With this expansion of his connections, his aspirations for both his business and the future of his daughter expanded. Raneer used the incoming resources, principally, the new microfinance organisations, some NGOs and the Trust to effect her household's recovery. The alliances with these microfinance organisations meant that she had an enhanced access to capital and her aspirations for her household were enhanced. While Shirani's household lost many of its sources of income and had outstanding loans, she managed the resources that she was able to access through the new microfinance organisations to such good effect, that some months after the tsunami the household continued pursuing the aspirations that they had had. Sushila accessed the external resources flowing into

this community in terms of aid from NGOs and the Trust, to effect the recovery of her business and to open a small retail outlet. Thus, after the tsunami, her aspirations to provide for her three children and live in a *vadagath* style were being realised.

Then there were the households which recovered the capital that they had lost with little change to their household circumstances and their aspirations. Gunasena lost only one of his sources of income. He was able to re-establish this by repairing his *wallam* using his savings. He used the state benefits to replace the household goods lost in the tsunami. The aspirations for his household in terms of amassing financial capital -- in the form of savings in the bank -- educating his children and establishing them creditably in life did not change. Lakmalee too was able to recover the capital which the household had lost through state benefits, NGO aid and the Trust. The aspiration of this household, modest by village standards, was to stabilise the embryonic businesses. Ramya's household recovered the position that they had occupied through state assistance, and aid from NGOs and the Trust. The main aspiration of this household, which was the marriage of Ramya, was achieved soon after the tsunami.

There were households on the landside, principally the households of those externally employed, who were unaffected by the tsunami in terms of damage to house and property, or income. However, they were affected by the tsunami in the sense that as the relative social position of other households either improved or contracted, this had implications for the position of these households in the social order of the community.

The resources which flowed into Sinhapura, through the state and NGOs, were not ones which were unfamiliar to the community. There was financial capital; material relevant to the fishing industry; and, stock and equipment for the businesses. All of this related to the on-going activities of the community. None of these resources required new institutions for their utilisation by the community. This meant that the community handled the new resources much as it had handled the old. This axis between resources and aspirations would not have remained the same if government policy in the aftermath of the tsunami had been different. For instance, if the state had established a series of post-secondary educational institutions to train the youth of tsunami-affected families in technological skills, or established industrial plants in the south-western region, such as those initiated by the late President Premadasa for garment factories in the early 1990s, this axis would, necessarily, have been modified.

As concluded in Chapters 4 & 5, the resources flowing into the village were not of an order to change the ideologies, the lifestyles and the aspirations of the two sides of the village. Households responded to these resources in terms of well-established aspirations, with the result that the resource-aspiration axis of the community, its social processes, continued as before. Therefore, it can be seen that in the post-tsunami period the recovery of the individual household was contingent, on the one hand, upon the capacity to activate alliances in order to accumulate capital, in terms of existing networks; on the other, it depended on the ability to navigate new alliances, in order to build new networks. Necessarily, this involved the pursuit of differential strategies of recovery. Consequently, there were positive and negative changes to the resource position of households, their capital, with a concomitant change in capacity, changes to networks of alliance, and to social position.

Who changed social position relative to whom? Within each of the categories of households identified in Chapter 3 there were households which fell into the categories described above. For instance, there were crew members such as Priyantha who felt that in the post-tsunami period in relation to households similar to his, those of other crew members, his household had experienced a decline in social position. In contrast, crew member Duminda's social position improved, tremendously, through a gift of a *wallam* from a philanthropically oriented foreign national. Overnight, he became a *wallam* owner with the social position and the potential to accumulate financial capital that this entails. Duminda and Priyantha, both crewmen, experienced the forces of rehabilitation differently. One improved his social position, dramatically; the other deteriorated, equally markedly. In so changing their positions relative to each other, they also changed their positions relative to many others in the community. Thus, the categories of households identified in Chapter 3 did not change. The principal change was of social position within a category. The implication of this is that the inflow of resources into this community, as a result of the tsunami, was not of an order to affect the social order, i.e., there was little movement between categories nor did new categories of individuals and households emerge so that the social order itself was modified. Still less did new activities transform the structure of the community.

My broad argument, therefore, in terms of inferences drawn from the discussion above is that although there were shifts in the social position of individual households, the

social processes in Sinhapura, identified in Chapter 3, were not transformed by the tsunami. This is because the axis between resources and aspirations remained, broadly, unchanged for the majority of the community. This continuity of aspirations should not, however, lead to the conclusion that no changes of significance took place in Sinhapura consequent upon the tsunami. The attitude to fishing, the issue of whether it is a desirable occupation, had begun to change. Other places of residence were seen as preferable to the beach. All this was beginning to affect the divide between the landside and the seaside and the ideological tussle between them.

Hence, at the time of the tsunami Sinhapura was a community in transition. Although few *wallam* owners were thinking in terms of the leap to the ownership of multi-day boats, the opportunities of education and employment opening up in the regional centres such as Galle meant that fishing families were aspiring to alternative occupations. A related trend was the purchase of land in the interior.

The tsunami accelerated this process, particularly with the shift of 75 seaside households, to new settlements inland. There was concern about personal safety, in the event of another tsunami, as well as the desire to move away from the proximity to the sea so that young boys were not lured into the fishing industry, with the promise of high income. Those such as the *unavasara* felt that the shift to the new settlement was an opportunity to transcend the social boundaries which, they felt, had been imposed upon them, in Sinhapura. Others such as Jayatissa, who continued to reside in his house in Sinhapura and who rented his house in the new settlement, saw it merely as a capital asset.

This situation in Sinhapura can be contrasted with post-earthquake Gujarat where heavy industrial, capitalist investment shaped the community so that a new dynamic, with an emphasis on the individual household, in a new setting, was the result (Simpson, 2005;2007). In Sinhapura there was no such investment, by the state or the private sector, in tsunami-affected areas.

Conclusion

My research is an attempt to study a disaster, the tsunami, in its many dimensions. The disaster has been conceptualised not as a break in the life of a community but as a process which moulds the complex processes of a community, and becomes one of the entities which shapes its future. Through the lens of a disaster the contexts of fishing, trade, caste and politics, and disaster relief have been analysed. Conversely, the ethnography of a disaster has been presented through the lens of a fishing village.

The focus of this research was a single village. However, as the study proceeded it became apparent that many of the issues thrown up by the research had a wider significance, and that a regional perspective was necessary. These issues have a relevance for the literature on disaster. They also have relevance for the fishing industry. Beyond this, the issues raised by this research in Sinhapura are significant for local government and local politics; the national policy on disaster; and international aid.

The remaking of Sinhapura has also been the result of the interaction between global, national and local forces in the sense that it was the interaction between the community, the state and international forces as represented by NGOs which reproduced this community. Anthropological research which engages with the interaction between the global, the national and the local, produces knowledge which becomes constituted within the context of international power relations. This resonates with the anthropological perspective on development, described by Lewis and Mosse (2006), as deconstructivist. In terms of this characterisation, it could be argued that my study is a deconstructivist analysis of those aspects of intervention in a disaster.

In the sections which follow I engage with the issues pertaining to disaster, some of which were identified in the Introductory Chapter, on the basis of what my research has demonstrated.

It should be reiterated at this point that this was not a study which attempted to compare the south and the west of Sri Lanka, with the north and the east, either in the scale and

the nature of the damage caused by the tsunami or in the type of rehabilitation (McGilvray, 2006).

Issues of Disaster

In the Introductory Chapter I have discussed the themes which are important in the disaster literature. I am concerned here with the extent to which my research engages with this literature.

One of the prominent themes in the disaster literature is vulnerability (Blaikie et al, 1994; Oliver-Smith 1999, 2002; Hoffman 1999, 2002; Varley, 1994; Twigg and Bhatt, 1998; Cannon, 2000; Frerks, 2010; McGilvray & Gamburd, 2010; Lewis, 1999; Hilhorst & Bankoff, 2004). While it points to an important feature of disaster situations, it relegates various complex phenomena to this one notion. A disaster is a far more complex phenomenon than that encompassed by this idea. It has many dimensions which the concept of vulnerability does not incorporate into its scheme of analysis. It does not, for instance, distinguish the vulnerability of the community, taken as a whole, from the differential vulnerability of households. There is an implication of vulnerability in the case of households, in Sinhapura, which had a less developed capacity to recover. For these reasons vulnerability as a tool of analysis of a disaster situation, from an anthropological perspective, seems to have only a limited value, as the experience of Sinhapura demonstrates.

The notion of risk also figures in the disaster literature (Zeckhauser & Shepard, 1984; Quarantelli, 1986; Smith, 1996; Paine, 2002). Some of the ways in which it is dealt with in this literature, i.e., through mechanisms of repression, insulation and fatalism, have already been discussed in the Introductory Chapter. The risks that coastal communities are exposed to by living near the sea, and through the occupation of fishing, makes them view risk in a way that differentiates them from other communities. On the south-western coast of Sri Lanka, maritime disasters such as cyclones had been very rare. Seafaring did present a risk, but it was a risk which was managed by, for instance, not going out to sea in hostile weather. Thus, risk was seen as something which was within the control of the community. The tsunami, however, changed this perception. For the first time here was a risk that could not be managed or controlled by the community. Therefore, the reaction of many people in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami was

to think in terms of a second home in the interior. Some did, in fact, purchase land and begin to build houses.

Then there is the notion, discussed in the literature, that a disaster exposes the underlying structure of a society, revealing two realities (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 2002). One is the surface reality, encountered in everyday life, and the other, a deeper one, revealed only in special situations and which has a deeper significance. While there is an obvious sense in which this could be said to be true, I find it more helpful to see both of these realities as part of a wider, all-embracing social process. One of the implications of this is that external forces have an impact on a community and that its social processes can be affected, as in the case of Sinhapura, or changed altogether, as in the case of Gujarat.

As for the point that the object of study is not so much the disaster event as the aftermath, my perspective in this thesis has been that there are social processes in communities; that disaster events feed into these social processes; and that this leads into the phenomenon, in itself a social process, which we identify, study and refer to as the aftermath (Simpson, 2012).

The literature contains many evaluations of the success and failure of the international response to this disaster, and as many prescriptions for better performance in the future (de Silva, 2007; Jayasuriya & McCawley, 2010; Nanayakkara, 2007; Mulligan & Shaw, 2011). These involve criticisms regarding inefficiency, duplication, and the implementation of programmes according to policy agendas. There have also been criticisms that governments as well as other organisations engaged in relief, ignored the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and violated binding international human rights law in relation to land rights, housing, livelihoods, and the concerns of vulnerable groups such as women, low castes and minorities. My research has not been an evaluation of disaster response, in this sense, although it does present some suggestions, discussed later on in this chapter, for a more coordinated recovery process in terms of liaison between the various actors in this process.

The literature highlights the point that women are a marginalised category as far as disaster response is concerned (Fordham, 2004; Enarson and Morrow, 1998; Mies and Shiva, 1993; Agarwal, 1992; Wickramasinghe & Ariyabandu, 2003; Ruwanpura & de Mel, 2006k; de Mel, 2009; Ruwanpura, 2009; Goonesekere, 2009). The idea is that

women suffer more than men in terms of physical impact; that their role in decision making is minimal; and, that reconstruction takes place within a patriarchal framework. The experience of the Sinhapura women confirms these perceptions. There are, however, two observations which must be made. The first is that the onerous task of getting disrupted households functioning again fell, largely, to the women. It is their energy in getting involved in coir production, abandoned by many at the time, which kept the home fires burning. The other, is that in asserting household rights to state assistance, where this was dependent on the assessments of government officials, it is the women who fought for justice for their households.

The Fisheries Industry

While this is the study of a disaster, it is a disaster which affected a fishing community. The issue which arises, in the context of my research, is the way in which the fishing communities of the south-western coast were evolving, at the time of the tsunami, in terms of their place in the wider economy and whether this disaster hastened this process.

At a first glance, the fisheries industry in Sri Lanka presents some contradictions. Sri Lanka is an island, yet the consumption of fish per capita, by nutritional standards, is regarded as low.¹⁸⁴ This has much to do with the small continental shelf that surrounds Sri Lanka's shores and, consequently, the limited availability of pelagic fish. However, fishing is a lucrative activity, depending on the technology used.

According to my informants, along this coast, as a largely Buddhist country fishing has a low moral position. Therefore, although it was financially lucrative, for some of those involved in the industry, many were keen to leave it and pursue some of the other occupations opening up in the region. They were certainly anxious that their children be educated and not follow this as an occupation. It could be argued, therefore, that the approach to fishing, as an occupation, was ambivalent.

To this extent, the communities along the south-western coast were in transition at the time of the tsunami. Some of the fishing households were attempting to move away

¹⁸⁴ The consumption of fish, in 2008, was 1.5 kilograms, per head, per month. Source: National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA). The fisheries authorities see heavy mechanisation as a solution to the difficulties of income of the artisanal sector and the difficulties of consumption faced by the country. Source: Discussion with officials of the Ceylon Fisheries Harbours Corporation.

from fishing to occupations based on education and entrepreneurship. Others were moving in the direction where their main craft would be multi-day boats, fishing largely for tuna using the long line method, and operating from large harbours. The harbours of Kalutara, Beruwela, Ambalangoda, Hikkaduwa, Galle, Matara, Devinuwara, Mirissa, Tangalle Kudawella, Hambanthota -- all on the western and southern coast -- were turning, almost exclusively, into multi-day boat harbours. The image, amongst the wider population, of the fisherman as a person of aggressive temperament given to imbibing strong liquor was giving way to one as a well-paid, professional.

This was, however, a slow process given the difficulties of transforming artisanal communities into fully mechanised ones. Harbours have to be expanded to accommodate a greater number of craft, and there is further capital investment in terms of those other technologies and infrastructure which are necessary to operate large numbers of mechanized craft. There is also the issue of retraining fishermen in new technology. The infusion of a large volume of capital becomes imperative. There is also the implication of inequality as innovation is often accessible only to the more affluent segments of the fishing industry (Acheson, 1981). All this has to be done against the political strength of artisanal fishermen who compose a sizeable component of voters in many coastal electorates.

Then, there were the immediate and local problems of illegal fishing -- the use of dynamite and 'light course' -- which is harmful to the marine environment and which depletes the limited resource available to artisanal fishing. In the south-western coast the fishing combines which use these methods have strong political backing such that the forces of law enforcement find apprehension and prosecution difficult. Then there are the foreign vessels, with superior technology, which fish illegally in Sri Lankan waters depriving Sri Lankan fishermen of their rightful catch. These policy issues which affect the industry, with their many political ramifications, all had an impact on the process of transition.

It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if the restructuring that was proposed by the FAO had been implemented, in the aftermath of the tsunami. There were, clearly, difficulties of capital, both for craft and for harbours. This apart, the new capital intensive mechanized industry could not have absorbed all those employed on *wallams*. This would have necessitated programmes of employment to absorb all those

displaced from the fishing industry. The possibility of fishermen being placed in a situation of uncertain income would not have been countenanced by the many MPs, around the country, who represented them in parliament.

As far as the general progress of this industry was concerned, this disaster did not hasten the movement towards multi-day craft, as neither the state nor non-governmental organisations supported such a restructuring of this industry. The move away from fishing gathered a little momentum, although for the majority of those involved in this industry the immediate income was too high to forego. A further factor which induced people to remain in fishing was the low level of investment in Sri Lanka, both foreign and local, and the, consequently, limited number of jobs that were created in new industries.

Caste and Politics

Caste and political patronage did not play a substantial role in the reconstruction process on the south-western coast. As discussed in Chapter 3, since the 1978 Constitution MPs, with their caste affiliations, have not been the significant personalities in local communities. This is illustrated by the fact that in the post- tsunami context, no politician from the party in government, the People's Alliance (PA), or the party in opposition, the United National Party (UNP) visited Sinhapura to view the damage and to commiserate with the affected households. It is in 1987 with the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, and the rising importance of local government, that caste became a factor in politics once again.

For the reasons discussed in Chapter 1, after the tsunami, state funds did not reach affected communities through local government institutions. Thus, the caste linkage between local politicians and their supporters found no expression in the matter of relief as this was handled through the network of the central government. It is through private sources that local government politicians were able to service their political clients.

The allegation has been that tsunami aid, from these private sources, was squirreled away into private accounts by local government politicians and used for illegitimate purposes such as election campaigns. This was certainly the allegation on the occasion of the Hikkaduwa Urban Council (UC) election of 2006, where the United National Party lost the majority and the People's Alliance came to power. Individuals were

elected to the UC in terms of the material resources spent on supporters and clients, at the time of the election, rather than on the basis of caste alliance. Local government politicians spent vast amounts of money on campaigning, as well as on direct hand-outs. The allegation was that these were funds which should have been disbursed to the tsunami-affected populations of the region. UC members re-contesting their seats, such as my informant Suranjith Weeraratne, found that they could not compete with this type of expenditure. Many lost their seats to the newer contestants contesting on the basis of material wealth. Weeraratne helped the Sinhapura community in many ways after the tsunami, mainly in terms of performing a liaison role. He is from a respected, political family in Sinhapura. His father was a Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) Chairman of the Sinhapura Town Council (TC) in the 1950s, a teacher and also the Village Headman.

Thus, the external sources of assistance available to tsunami-affected communities generated a culture of depersonalised, material relationships. The decline of the caste politics axis as an important avenue through which to accumulate capital to realise aspiration, at the local level, became emphasised. The tsunami, as an event which fed into ongoing social processes, entrenched a shift to a different politics of resources and development, which had been taking place in this region, indeed all over the country, since the implementation of the 1978 Constitution.

Effects of Resettlement

The immediate result of 75 households relocating to the new settlements was that the intensity of neighbourhood social interaction, on the seaside, diminished. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, business activity on the High Street was affected. This was, however, a temporary phenomenon and as new relationships emerged, neighbourhood reciprocities were once again established. Many of the 75 households that left the village retained fishing as their chief occupation. Equipment was left in Sinhapura and had to be looked after. This meant that in some instances old networks of relations continued to operate, so that those who left continued to play some part in the life of the village.

Relief to long-term Development

There was the perception amongst NGOs that there must be a connection between disaster relief and long-term development -- that reconstruction must lead to conditions better than those which existed at the time of the disaster. These ideas incorporate those about justice and equity as well as community involvement (Kennedy, Ashmore, Babister, Kelman, 2008).

Simpson (2012) quoting Mill (1848) states that countries recover rapidly from states of devastation, due to the accelerated consumption of what had been previously produced which would have been consumed anyway -- that 'hyper-consumption' in the aftermath of a disaster provides 'economic stimulus'. Klein (2007) has referred to some aspects of this process as 'disaster capitalism' and commented on the strategic extensions of free market capitalism; and the instrumental use of a catastrophe to promote a range of capitalist interests.

Investment and the powerful economic stimulus that this provides, did not take place on the southern and western coast of Sri Lanka except in Hambanthota. In relation to the fisheries industry, the Sri Lankan government and organisations such as the FAO took the decision not to pursue a total restructuring of the industry, with the heavy investment that this implies. The emphasis was on rebuilding small sectors of damaged towns and villages, and on moving people to new housing complexes inland. It is true, as the discussion of Chapters 4 & 5 reveals, that there was a considerable inflow of capital into the disaster-affected communities. However, this capital was not directed towards infrastructure development which could have provided the framework for extensive capitalist development, and transformed these communities. The area affected by the tsunami was a thin strip of coastline; not one well-defined, geographical, political, administrative and social entity, as it was in Gujarat, and as often happens in the case of earthquakes. Furthermore, the affected areas were not large political units which could exert significant pressure on politicians. Thus, the state did not foster a programme of capitalist development in disaster-affected communities which would lead to a new order, both economic and otherwise.

Sri Lanka can be contrasted with Gujarat where, according to Simpson (2005, 2007), the central feature of post-disaster development was a heavy inflow of external investment which involved the setting up of large-scale industrial ventures, the planning

of spatial areas, and the creation of suburban consumers which transformed the disaster-affected community. This investment transformed infrastructure and provided a new framework for economic activity and social interaction. This brought with it many others changes, principally, the breakdown of the small communities previously familiar to the inhabitants in that part of Gujarat affected by the earthquake:

“For many families...there is now a veiled sense of relief that they have been offered a way out of the old town with its oppressive, dirty and airless streets, congestion, gossip, hostility and bitterness, and into what is for most still an imaginary life in the suburbs. In other cases, families have fragmented, some taking the opportunity to escape subordinate or dependent or unpleasant relationships. Others have been released from conditions of bondage, and many from poor housing conditions.” (Simpson:2005:244).

As far as NGOs involved in post-disaster relief in Sri Lanka were concerned, while there was some interest in long-term development, they, too, did not promote the type of large-scale investment which was a feature of post-disaster Gujarat.

The point to be made is that not every disaster presents a situation which is conducive to capitalist development. Under certain post-disaster conditions hyper consumption is not one of the observable phenomena. According to Bandara and Narampanawa (2007), aggregate consumption in Sri Lanka declined by 3% after the tsunami.

The inference to be drawn here is that a disaster is an opportunity for external interests to infiltrate disaster affected zones. They may be of a capitalist nature and involve greater state control, as was the case in Gujarat. Alternatively, the inputs can come from two sources as was the case on the south-western coast of Sri Lanka, where state and NGO assistance lead to a kaleidoscope of interventions and reactions on the part of the community.

Policy

The community based approach, favoured by NGOs, which places the emphasis on civil society as the generating force of reconstruction, disregards the fact that in the face of a disaster, recovery is often perceived by the community in terms of the individual household. This was apparent in Sinhapura where the damage was not to community property but to individual households. The focus on community development is

subsequent to the recovery of the individual household. For these reasons the household came to figure in my research as the unit of analysis.

I have already discussed the particular approach that the Trust adopted in its relief work. The focus was one village, Sinhapura, in an intensive manner. Many organisations operated over a large geographical area engaging, primarily, in one activity. Given this perspective, they had earmarked a particular sum for each community. The sum therefore, that was available to each recipient household in a community was determined by these imperatives. In contrast, the Trust was limited to one village and its households and had as its major principle, the objective of getting as many households as possible back to the point where they could facilitate their own recovery.

The insight I draw from the experience of Sinhapura is that an organisation working intensively in a community, supported by the state in terms of the provision of basic needs, could liaise with non-governmental relief organisations, operating in a much larger way, to the benefit of the community. The needs of each household could be assessed and the relevant assistance from the relevant NGO harnessed, to fulfil specific needs. This would lead to the rehabilitation of disaster-affected communities in a more coordinated and effective manner. Furthermore, such a scenario, particularly if it involved the dimension of research, could provide relief organisations with valuable information which could inform the perspective and design of their relief efforts. It would reveal a whole series of problems and possible solutions, in a way that the macro-operation which focuses on the region could not. Thus, the unit of reconstruction should be, for most purposes, the individual household.

This is not to argue that such a model should or could replicate the experience of the Trust, in its totality. The strengths and weaknesses of the Trust were very specific to the personal circumstances of the Trustees. In this sense, it is not a replicable exercise. This is to state that there is a perspective and an approach which has emerged out of the experience of the Trust which could be the basis for future intervention in disaster-affected communities. It would require a more formal structure than that of the Trust -- more rules and regulations and more accountability. It could not be a family-based initiative, as the Trust became, for the reasons that I have specified in the Introductory Chapter.

Towards Handling Disaster

The importance of disaster preparedness was widely accepted as necessary in the aftermath of the tsunami. A major concern was the communication of information about an impending danger. When a warning was given on 30 December 2004, four days after the tsunami, the information reached the relevant areas through the media and the police.

By the time that I began my fieldwork in 2007, some elements of an early warning system were in place on the south-western coast. Television, radio and mobile phones were used to convey messages of potential disaster. Many organisations had provided training for first responders and for households as to their actions in the eventuality of a disaster: for instance, the importance of 'tsunami bags'. I was in Sinhapura when tsunami warnings were issued in 2004, 2005 and in 2008. The warning spread fast through mobile phones and the radio and most people responded quickly to the direction to evacuate the immediate vicinity of the coast, the area of danger, to high ground.

There were also many initiatives in terms of the adaptation of the physical environment, to protect against future disasters. At many points along the Galle Road on the western and southern coast there is a bund, built at the vegetation line, approximately eight feet high, which is expected to act as a barrier against future tsunamis. Other schemes have involved the growing of mangroves and other vegetation to reduce the force of potential waves. Sand mining, which exposed the village of Peraliya to the full force of the waves, has been regulated and, certainly in the immediate post-tsunami period, vigorously implemented. A programme was developed to teach those dwelling by the seaside to swim. This had government support and the co-operation of many other organisations, both local and regional.

When I interviewed the relevant government agency in 2008, they stated that while a new Disaster Act had been passed by the legislature, in 2005, government policy in relation to this enactment had not been implemented (Patil, 2007). For instance, there has been confusion amongst the various arms of the bureaucracy, as to the procedures to be followed in the event of a disaster. Equipment, in terms of tents and other emergency supplies, have not been stockpiled, nor has there been any plan as to where such stocks

would come from in the event of a necessity. Briefly, a detailed plan for the various steps to be taken by the country in terms of immediate relief, housing, livelihoods and infrastructure, in the event of a disaster has not been comprehensively worked out, such that the various arms of government know how they should act in such an eventuality. At the village level, as the tsunami of 2004 recedes in the collective memory, there is the feeling that another tsunami will not occur for another 2000 years.

Immediately after a disaster has struck everyone appears to be in the same boat, undifferentiated in the circumstances in which they find themselves. As the process of rehabilitation commences the differences between people in terms of the social order of the community begin to emerge. This, as I discovered in Sinhapura, often leads to controversy with different categories of people and the rehabilitating agencies often being at cross-purposes. Some individuals and households want the status quo restored. Others feel that the disaster is an opportunity for change. It is in this context that the focus on the household becomes significant.

Comparison of Sinhapura with other communities on the south-western coast

The damage suffered by Sinhapura, and its recovery, can best be understood through a comparison with some of the other communities of the south-western coast.¹⁸⁵

In Chapter 1, I presented communities on the south-western coast which were diverse in terms of features such as population, caste composition, ethnicity, religion, technology and the access to capital, education, employment and health. As far as the fisheries industry was concerned this diversity related to technology, the access to credit, the systems of sale and marketing and the role of fishing in the wider economy.

Looked at in these terms, the communities of the south-western coast can be classified into four broad types: communities which were entirely artisanal; communities with the first level of mechanisation, i.e., craft with outboard motors and a few multi-day boats berthed in nearby fisheries harbours; communities with fisheries harbours where multi-

¹⁸⁵ The geographical location of these communities is described in Chapter 1. Please also refer the map of Sri Lanka.

day boats predominate; large towns which are the main centres of the region with large harbours where, again, multi-day boats predominate.

Differential damage along this coastline had much to do with the diversity of communities. In the totally artisanal communities the damage was to both housing and craft. In Peraliya, for instance, the damage was so extensive that the community ceased to exist. In the larger communities such as Sinhapura and Weligama, dominated by *wallams* and similar craft, the area which suffered damage was a strip parallel to the coastline, often including the commercial hub, the High Street. In the communities dominated by multi-day boats the damage to harbours and to boats was extensive. Only the boats which were out at sea escaped damage. In the large towns too the damage to craft, harbours, the commercial area and residential areas was substantial. Here, too, it was a strip parallel to the beach which was most severely affected. In these towns it must be noted that the damage to fishing was only a part of the total damage to the community.

In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami it was the neighbouring communities of the interior who came to the assistance of these communities. Next was the assistance from the state -- the benefits to households; the repair of infrastructure, such as roads and public buildings; and the restoration of services, such as transport. Then, came the aid from NGOs, and institutions of the UN, ad hoc assistance from private individuals, both local and foreign. The credit needed for recovery came from kin in distant villages, professional money-lenders, microfinance organisations and banks.

Artisanal communities received the basic state benefits and very little else. There was the ad hoc help from a foreign national or a small NGO. The Sinhapura type of community, i.e., those with the first level of mechanisation, benefitted from a variety of sources -- the state, NGOs, microfinance, private individuals, communities in the interior, kin and commercial sources. In the communities such as those of Mirissa and Hikkaduwa, dominated by a harbour, and in large towns such as Galle and Matara, infrastructure repair was the responsibility of the state. Capital became available from many sources -- bilateral aid, for instance -- channelled through the state. The heavy expenditure required for the repair of harbours was met by the state and by some foreign

companies working through their governments. The state focused on the rehabilitation of the larger towns as they were regional centres. The regional economy, much of it unaffected by the tsunami, could not function if these centres did not recover quickly. The multi-day boat owners in these communities had access to commercial credit, to fund their recovery, as they had been operating profitable concerns. The capital they required also came from microfinance, NGOs, and from the fish trade, for example, the fish merchants.

As stated in Chapter 1, a large-scale development had been planned for Hambanthota, which included an international airport and an international harbour. The rehabilitation of Hambanthota, after the tsunami, incorporated many of the features of this proposed development.¹⁸⁶ In Sri Lanka it is only in Hambanthota that this type of wider development, on the basis of a state plan previously formulated, took place after the tsunami.

The recovery of the communities along the south-western coast was, thus, a product of the interaction between the resources which flowed into these communities and their social processes. The relative importance of the community, in terms of its commerce and technological sophistication, determined, to a large extent, the type of assistance that it received. In the case of Sinhapura this correlation reveals why this community did not receive the assistance from banks which the communities with a large fleet of multi-day boats received.

The differences between the fishing communities of the south-west coast can be identified in a somewhat direct way in terms of the technology used; the way in which the fish is sold; how it fits into a wider economy; the size of the community; its relationship to the rest of the community where such exists; migration; education; caste and so on. However, as my acquaintance with each of these communities grew I became aware of the complexity of circumstances which have produced the communities that we see today. All those factors which influenced Sinhapura during the last 100 years or more, also influenced these other communities, sometimes in very different ways. Capital and the uses to which it was put, is one of these. While this account helps to

¹⁸⁶ Source: Discussion with local government officials in Hambanthota.

place Sinhapura in a wider context a fuller comparison of the communities of this coast has to await a future study.

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